



Inside

**HAS VERNE GAGNE DUMPED
MAD DOG VACHON?**

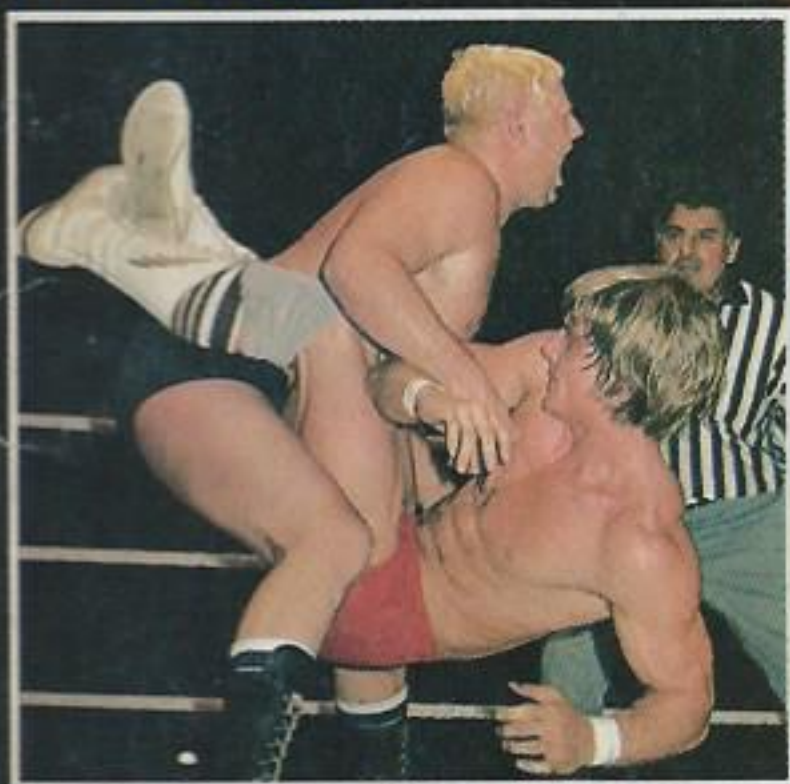
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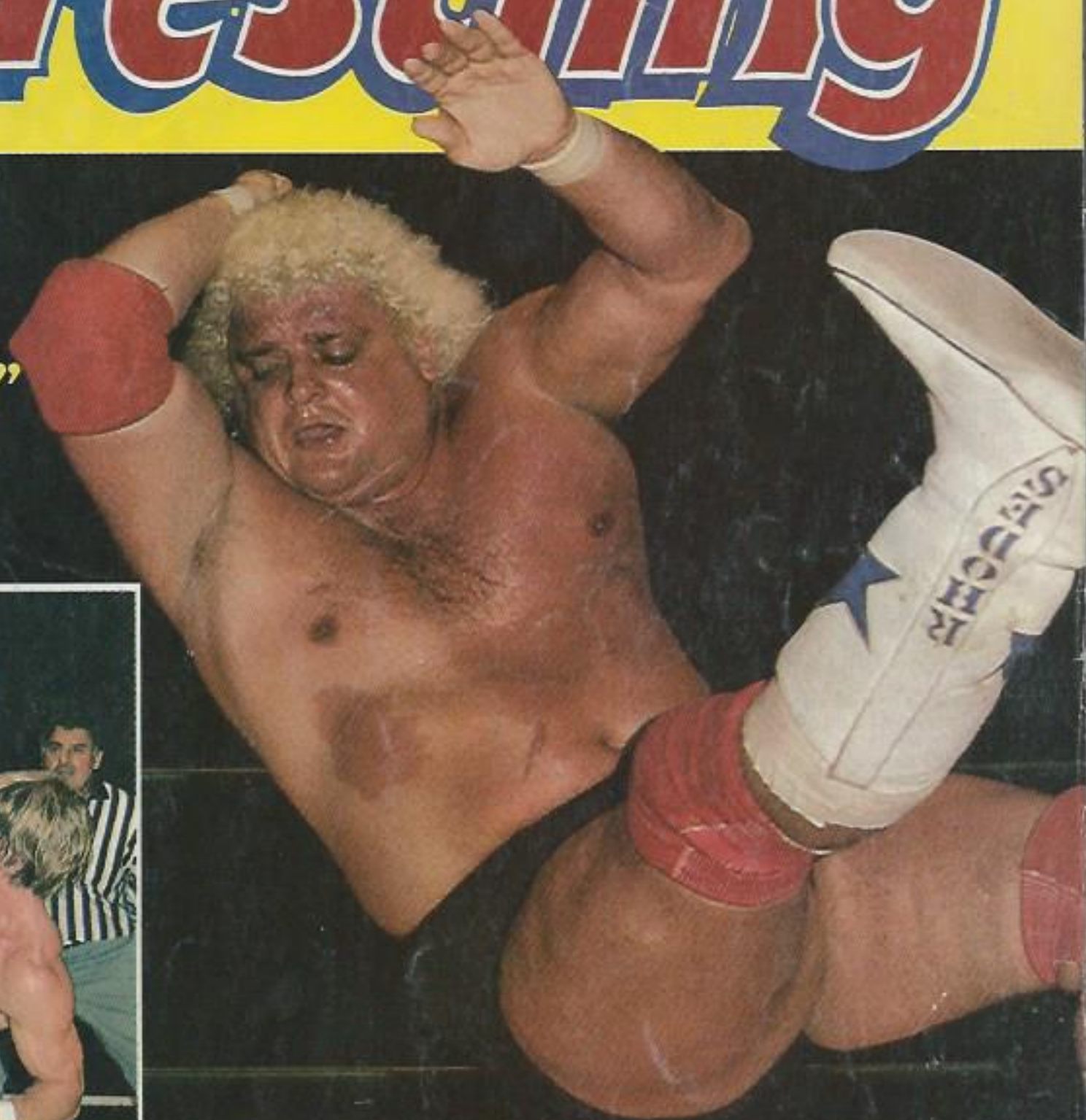
Wrestling

REVENGE!

**"AN ARM
FOR AN ARM"
SAYS DUSTY
RHODES**



**KEVIN VON ERICH:
"I'M TIRED OF LIVING
IN MY FAMILY'S SHADOW"**



**THE MYSTERY BEHIND
THE MASKED SUPERSTARS**

**Expose' BRUNO NEEDED
ILLEGAL HELP TO DEFEAT
SUPERSTAR GRAHAM**



EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Peter
King

Editor-in-Chief

Harley Race wants it both ways. On many television interviews, he is fond of telling the audience how great a champion he is, how he deserves their respect. Race says he is the perfect individualist--he constantly brags how he got where he is without anyone's help.

His favorite speech is, "Having the NWA belt means I'm the best, roughest, toughest man in the world. I do what I have to do to win."

Earlier in his championship reign, these words were true. Race is a brawler, and a damn good one. The first year of this current title reign, Race defended his title if not always scientifically, at least in a way which left no doubts he deserved to be champion.

But this has changed. His recent matches have shown him to be a man obsessed with the title. A man who will do whatever it takes outside the ring to win.

A few months ago, Race interfered in a bout featuring Tommy Rich. Rich was scheduled to wrestle Race for the NWA belt the next night. But because of Race's interference, Rich suffered crippling leg injuries. Race points to this despicable incident with pride.

Race has paid a select group of rulebreakers, most notably Austin Idol, in his campaign to cripple all opposition. In recent months, Idol has led interference for Race in bouts against Mr. Wrestling II and Dusty Rhodes, among others.

It is also rumored that at least one member of the NWA governing board is on Race's payroll. This is to make sure there will be no disciplinary action taken against Race by the NWA.

Harley Race is a scared champion. The longer he holds the belt, the more he fears losing it. A man who will do anything to win a wrestling match is not a champion. He is a very dangerous man.

TOP SECRET

Behind the Dressing Room Door

by Stu
Saks



NOT ONLY HAS Larry Zbyszko split Bruno Sammartino's skull, he has split Bruno Sammartino's personality.

Beneath the surface of rage lies a well of pain.

"You know, when I see him get on TV shooting off his mouth about how he's going to do this to me and how he's going to do that to me, how he's going to teach *me* a lesson, how *he* is the new Living Legend, I burn up."

Bruno seemed to be loosening up. The quotes were beginning to flow. It was, by far, the most unusual interview I had ever conducted. Bruno was on his daily six-mile run near his home in Pittsburgh, and there I was, stride-for-stride, the conversation being taped on a sensitive mini-recorder strapped to my waist. With approximately two miles remaining, Bruno's emotions began to surface.

"When I hear all that nonsense coming out of his mouth, it makes me sick," he said. "The veins in my muscles bulge. I want nothing more at that point than to crush him like a grape."

Bruno shook his head. He was deep in thought but never lost his even stride. "Before I go to sleep at night," he continued, "a lot of things run through my mind. I start to think about the outrage I've been feeling. I start to think about what Larry and I have gone through together, how close we were. I think about all the things he said. Could this whole thing be my fault? Of course I spent a lot of time training the kid, teaching him everything I could. He seemed so grateful then. Is it possible that I smothered Larry in the image I thought he should have? I always thought that was the image he wanted. But I could be wrong. Nobody's perfect. These are the things I think about at night. It's hard to sleep."

It's also hard to keep up with a man who has been running six miles a day since his childhood. The most I had ever run was two miles. This was my own personal marathon, but it was well worth it.

(Continued on page 48)

Body Slams & Pinfalls

By Dan
Shocket



Constant rumors that Bobby Heenan and Nick Bockwinkel are on the verge of splitting may eventually force an actual split, in the opinion of Associate Editor Dan Shocket. Shocket believes the AWA champion is facing undue pressure to break with his manager.

ONE OF THE most vicious whispering campaigns in wrestling history is taking place right now. The objects of their slanders are Nick Bockwinkel and Bobby Heenan. The purpose of this ugly rumor-mongering is to split up the pair.

By now, everyone has heard the nonsense. It's some variation of "Heenan is controlling Bockwinkel against the champion's will. If he could, Bock-

winkel would leave Heenan in a minute. The manager is a blackmailer!"

Come now. How can anyone in their right minds believe this slop? Bockwinkel has never wrestled better than he does today. As AWA champion, he reigns over the area with an iron fist. For intelligent fans, he's the most exciting and complex grappler in the world. Heenan has to be given a great deal of credit for that.

Think a moment, if the strain isn't too great. Could these two function so well if they hated each other. The easiest way for Bockwinkel to escape would be to lose a match. I've seen their contract. Heenan remains manager only for as long as Bockwinkel remains champion. If Nick is being blackmailed, all he has to do is lose and his "ordeal" is over.

The fact remains that Bockwinkel continues to win. The AWA officials continue to throw their best men at Nick; he throws them right back in their laps. Referees handcuff him constantly, only to have Heenan invent new ways for Nick to triumph. The Bockwinkel-Heenan alliance has produced a mark of excellence that all others will have to compete against. Yet the rumors continue.

Unhappily, the constant barrage of slanders and innuendos is taking its toll on the partnership. Nick Bockwinkel is a proud man. He has every right to have pride in his accomplish-

(Continued on page 62)

ON THE ROAD

with
GARY MORGENSTEIN



RACHMANINOFF'S SECOND SYMPHONY soothed from twin speakers atop dark, brown end tables. A print of Van Gogh's hellacious Self-Portrait stared down the back of Nick Bockwinkel as he elegantly poured expensive wine, sifted, sniffed, and sipped.

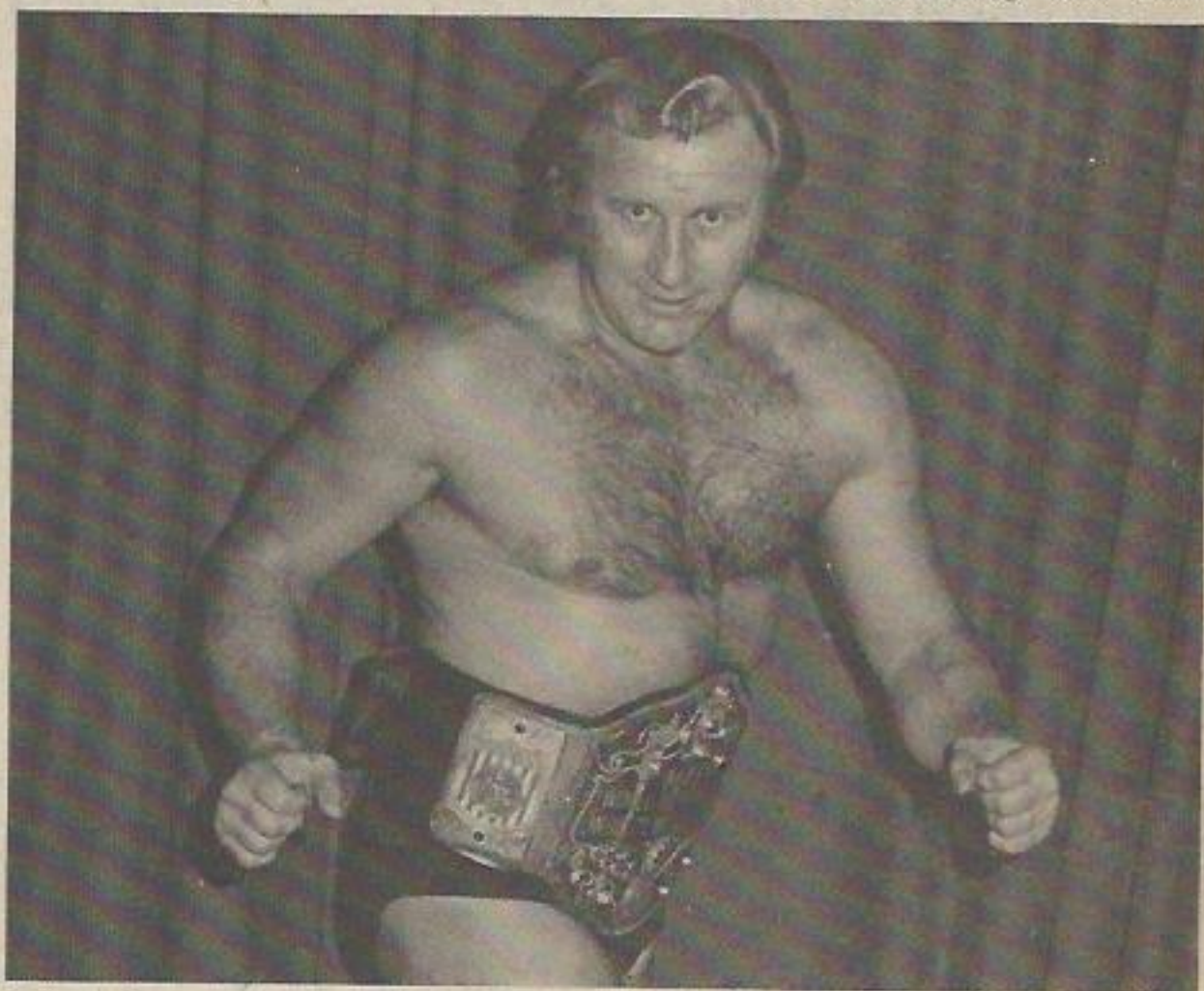
"Exquisite," Bockwinkel said, eyes closing.

An evening with Nick Bockwinkel. Witty, sarcastic, incisive,

Bockwinkel complained I unfairly portrayed him as an insensitive puppet of Bobby Heenan. I don't like when people accuse me of such bias. Figure I'd check out Nicky boy.

Ever a gracious host, Bockwinkel prepared a superb veal dish complete with escargot in mushroom caps, spinach salad and asparagus in hollandaise sauce. Add chocolate mousse and you've got the makings of a gourmet chef.

"I make something like this



Nick Bockwinkel prides himself on being a diversified champion. Not only is he a superior wrestler, but to Gary Morgenstein's surprise, he is also a connoisseur of the arts and fine foods.

intelligent, ruthless. Pick an adjective to describe the AWA champion and, with a little help from his hugo ego, it'll fit.

"I'm many things to many people," said Bockwinkel, reclining in his chair. "Greats like me tend to have a wide appeal. Everyone can see a little of their hopes and dreams in my own monumental accomplishments.

"That's why I'm so beloved. Some champions, hell, most champions are one-dimensional. I have many interests, many pursuits." Bockwinkel gestured about the elegantly furnished room.

Traveled all the way to Minnesota for this interview.

every night. Love to cook, test of my innate intellect," said Bockwinkel, shoving dishes into the dishwasher and bringing some aged brandy into the living room. "Now, I imagine you've got some questions."

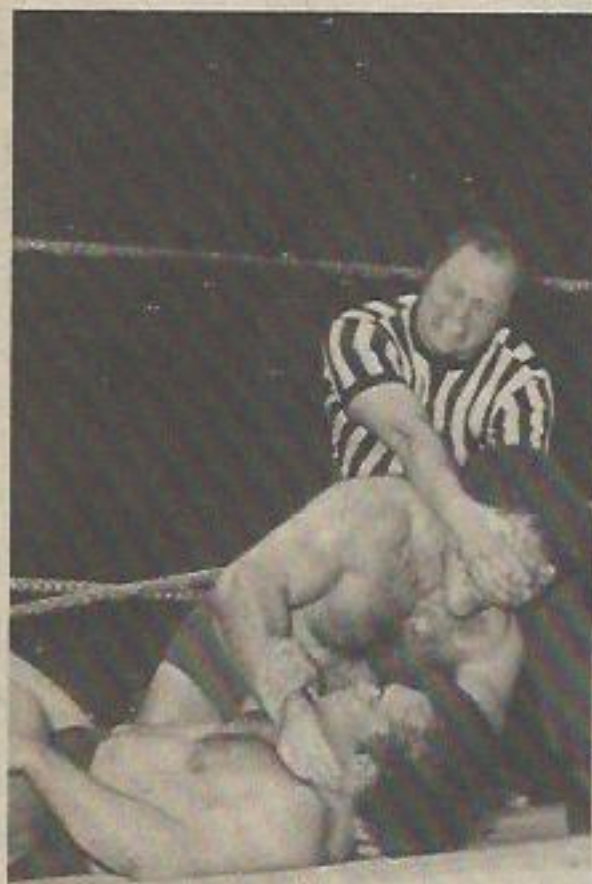
"Some," I replied. "Basically, I'd like to get the overall portrait of Nick Bockwinkel, man, instead of the typical picture of Nick Bockwinkel, roguish AWA champion."

"Rogue, huh?" Bockwinkel said, smiling. Apparently the word delighted him. "Yes, you could say I'm a rogue, sort of. A man who does and says what he believes in no matter the pressures, no matter

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NAMES MAKI

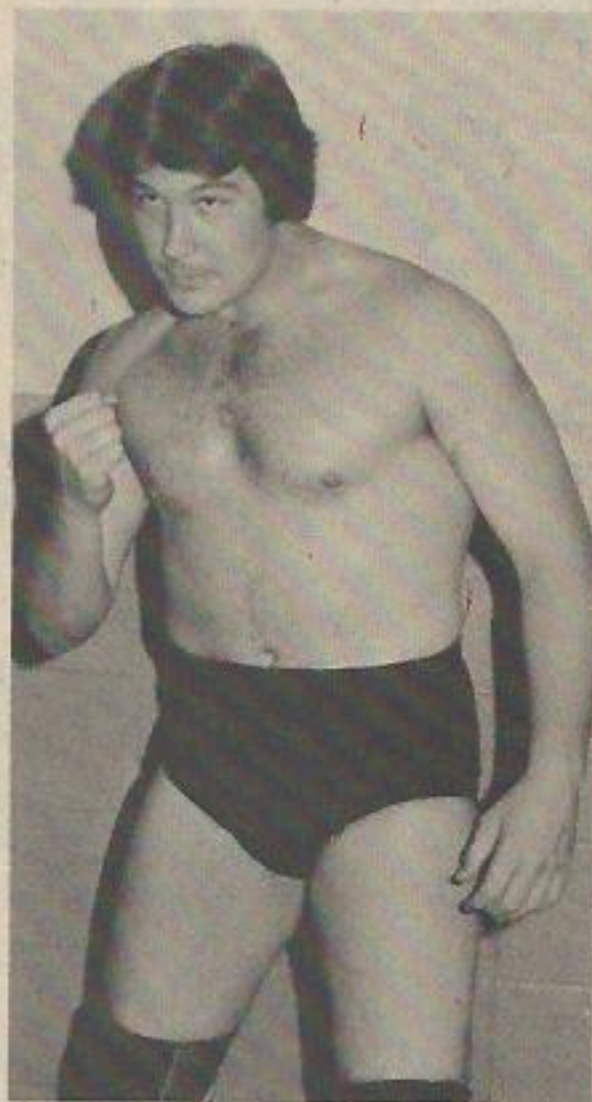
BRUNO SAMMARTINO went berserk in front of the largest crowd ever at New York's Madison Square Garden (a whopping 26,102 fans) as he tried to choke the life out of his former friend LARRY ZBYSZKO. Sammartino, disqualified for his actions, said, "Something snapped when that punk kid started using dirty tactics on me. I just couldn't hold in my animosity any longer. Doggone it, it's lucky for that guy that the referee and ARNOLD SKOALAND pulled me off him when



BRUNO VS. ZBYSZKO

they did. I don't know what I would have done had I not been stopped."

CHIEF JAY STRONGBOW is wrestling in Georgia and we're told the NWA is eyeing him for a future title match against champion HARLEY RACE . . . TED DiBIASE has left for a six-week tour of Japan . . . TOJO YAMAMOTO would like to enlist the services of ANDRE THE GIANT



TED DiBIASE

as his tag team partner in his upcoming clash against KURT VON HESS and RANDY COLLINS . . . World Junior heavyweight champion LES THORNTON wants a match against International Junior heavyweight king MIKE GRAHAM.

JIM DILLON has brought PROFESSOR TANAKA to Texas to help him in his war against rival manager GARY HART and Hart's protege MARK LEWIN. "Tanaka's martial arts style will be too much for those two to handle," Dillon says. "We'll run 'em out of Texas."

U.S. champion JIMMY SNUKA could not get away with an illegal pin over RIC FLAIR, but he did get away with his title. Obscured from referee SONNY

FARGO'S view, Snuka pinned Flair using Ric's trunks for added leverage. Luckily for Ric, Johnny Weaver witnessed the incident and reported it to Fargo who then disqualified Snuka. The title, of course, does not change hands on a disqualification.

MR HATORI has taken KILLER KAHN into the deep south "hoping for better competition than we got in Florida and Georgia," as Hatori put it . . . HULK HOGAN says he is not impressed with the physical prowess of IVAN PUTSKI. "He's not as strong as me, not as smart as me, and of course, not as good lookin' as me." . . . STAN STASIAK and RODDY PIPER are having their hands full in their matches against THE KIWIS. As a tag team, the Kiwis are one of the roughest duos ever seen in the Pacific Northwest.

RICK STEAMBOAT and JAY YOUNGBLOOD came to the WWF hoping to get a bout against THE SAMOANS. But CAPTAIN



RODDY PIPER

N' NEWS

Bill Apter
reporting...



JAY YOUNGBLOOD

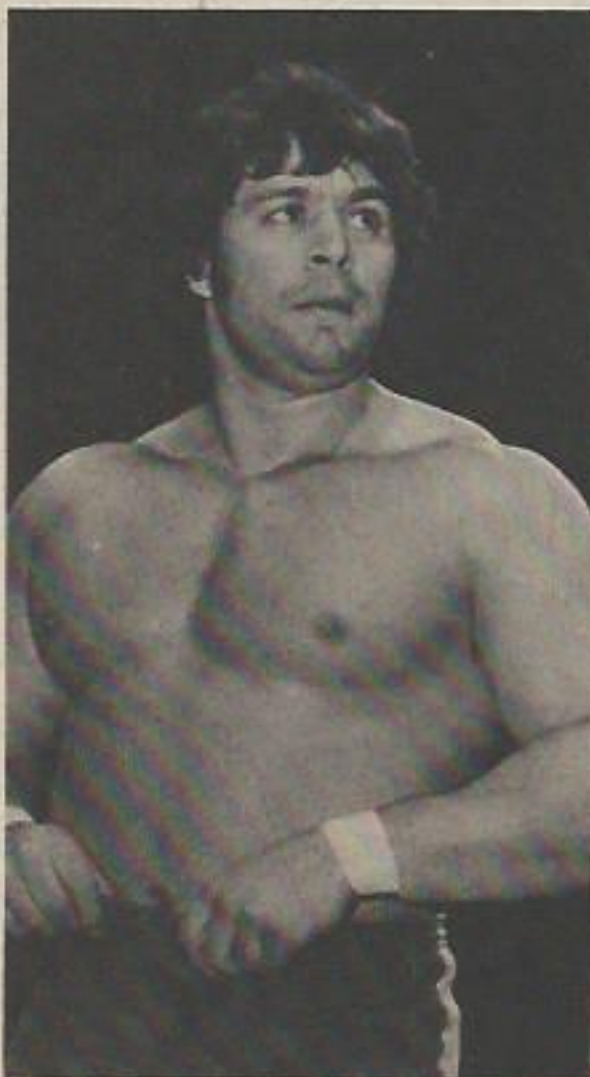


LOU ALBANO

LOU ALBANO, manager of the wild duo, says, "No way those bums get at my champions. They first have to beat some other teams." Lou does not care that they are recognized NWA tag team champions in the Mid-Atlantic and many other regions . . . PEDRO MORALES is negotiating with WWF promoters and may be in the area soon. "I look forward to



PEDRO MORALES



DINO BRAVO

seeing all my good friends there," says the former WWF champion.

KEN PATERA wants everyone to know he is not through chasing WWF champion BOB BACKLUND. "Sure the WWF refuses to make me the top challenger," says Patera. "Backlund's best friend is head of the ratings committee. He's trying to get me out of the ratings completely. It won't work Bobby Backlund! I'll be in that ring against you soon and that will be it for you!"

Japanese star ANTONIO



ANTONIO INOKI

INOKI is readying himself for another tour of the U.S.

In the AWA, DINO BRAVO and GREG GAGNE have been teaming more and more often. They won't get a shot at the tag team title however, since Greg's dad, VERNE GAGNE, owns that belt along with MAD DOG VACHON.

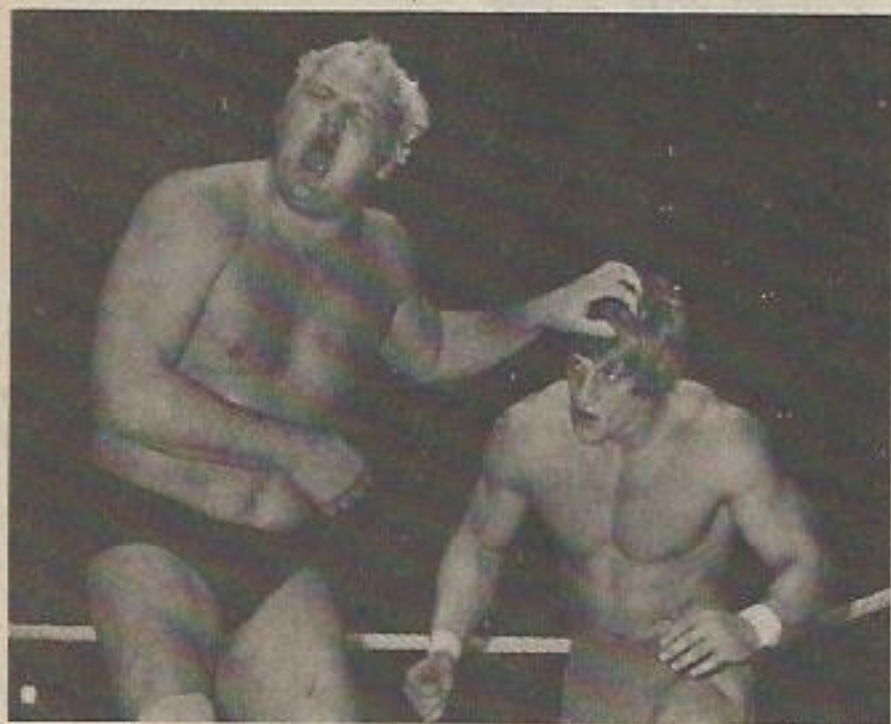
That's all for now. See you next month. □



Matt Brock's **PLAIN SPEAKING**

HOUSTON, TX—Smooth face, bright eyes, muscular physique. I'm starting to believe Kevin Von Erich could be the next superstar in wrestling. *Could* be. [Editors, underline and accentuate.] See a few pitfalls along the way. Von Erich's terribly ambitious, too much so for one so young. His expectations and desires outstrip his current capacity. Sure, he wants to be champion. Who doesn't? Sure, he wants to climb and conquer all the mountains. Who doesn't? But Kevin might not be able to defeat Race. Now. He is extremely talented, but lacks

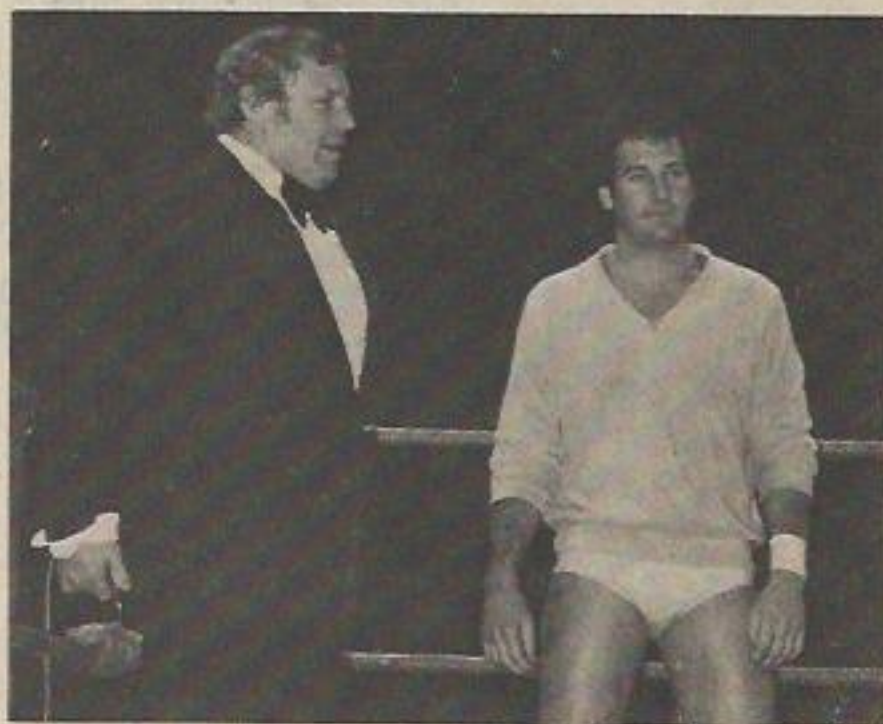
when a patrol car pulled up. Fine upstanding gentlemen checked me out and politely told me to get into the car. When I explained I was a New York writer, they almost read me my rights. Then I told them what I did for a living. In this case, that either gets me arrested or buys me a drink. This time, the cops kindly drove me to my hotel, which I wouldn't have been able to find my myself. On the way, Officer Tom Barkey commented on the current confusing state of AWA wrestling. Specifically, Greg Gagne's use of Lord Al Hays as manager. Not exactly similar



DICK MURDOCH VS. KEVIN VON ERICH

the experience forged on night after night of bloody, vicious battling. Kevin must perfect his skills, realize that truly good things do not come easy, even to one as naturally skilled as he. Remember, Kevin, that innate talent may jettison you to the top. But only hard work and perseverance keep you there.

OMAHA, NE: They close gin joints down at midnight here! I wandered up and down the street, looking for some amber liquid until 1:30,



LORD AL HAYS AND GREG GAGNE

types. Barkey believes Hays is manipulating Greg to get to Verne and eventual control of all anti-Bockwinkel and Heenan forces in the AWA. This would set up the inevitable showdown for domination of the entire area. Figured it was worth investigating. Got up around noon, sauntered over to the arena and interviewed Greg. Firmly and politely, Gagne maintained his relationship with Hays benefited both men, and ultimately, all of wrestling. But he wouldn't specify. Neither would Hays, who also insisted

Harder than nails, veteran wrestling reporter Matt Brock has logged more miles covering wrestling than any other journalist. Every month Matt will travel to the sport's hotbeds, reporting everything he sees without fear or favor

the sport would derive immediate and long-term gains. So I checked out Bobby Heenan. He ranted and raved that this was a conspiracy to drive him and Bockwinkel out of wrestling. You know, he might be right.

TAMPA, FL: Who the devil is Mr. Florida? Where did he come from? What is his mission in life? What is he like? And, who might he be. Already, various rulebreakers accord him angry, indeed, nervous attention. Like Sir Oliver Humperdink, whose present plan is bringing Super Destroyer to the world championship. Nothing must interfere with this plan, insists Humperdink. However, Mr. Florida seems intent

on disrupting and perhaps destroying the ruthless ambitions of Humperdink and Super Destroyer. If so, Mr. Florida has made a fearsome enemy.

NEW YORK, NY: How much longer for Ivan Putski and Tito Santana? Many experts, myself included, thought their reign would be short and end bitterly. Seems we're wrong, the so-called experts. At this moment, the WWF tag team champs are destined for continuing greatness. Their smooth blend of toughness and grace delights audiences and bewilders foes. Another example of a vastly underrated team surprising everyone. Including Ol' Matt. □




DICK SLATER VS. MR. FLORIDA

What is this mystery which baffles and unnerves the NWA? Two masked men harboring frightful secrets behind their colorful masks and snarling lips. Two masked men determined to protect their secrets. At any cost

THE M BEH THE M SUPER



MYSTERY MIND MASKED STARS



“**V**ERY FAMILIAR,” said Blackjack Mulligan, tapping two fingers on the arm of his chair. “Son-of-a-gun is so darn familiar, but I can’t put my finger on who he is.”

Masked men inspire speculation and controversy. Something about a tight mask over a thick face which compels fans to want to know the identity. Mystery, intrigue, romance, swirl about the man. Why is he wearing that mask?

A fugitive from justice? An escapee from a chain gang? Perhaps the object of a jealous

husband's wrath? A horribly mutilated victim of a train wreck? Or simply, a man whose mental processes are warped, twisted beyond any rational human perception.

A wild-eyed, certifiable maniac. A man like Masked Superstar II?

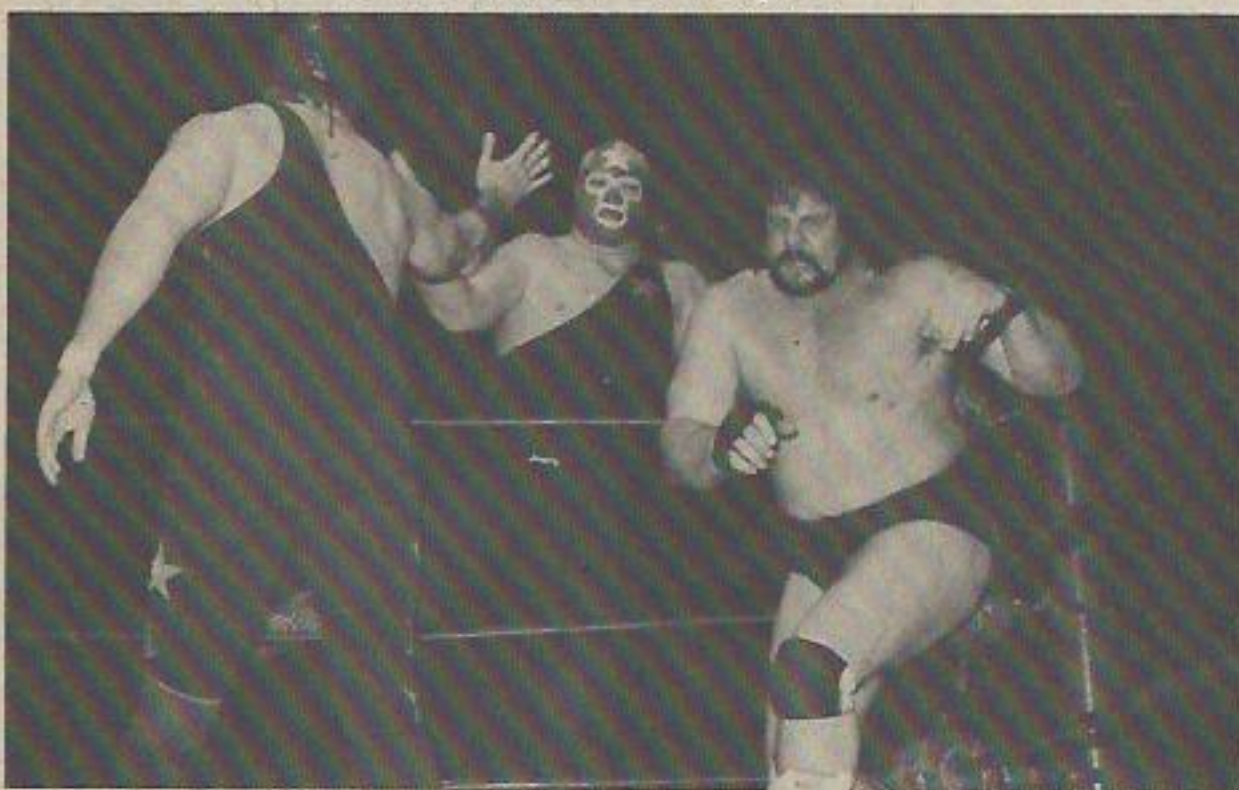
"I know the guy," said Mulligan, frowning. "I know him. You can't hide wrestling styles."

Mulligan's had a checkered career, breaking into professional wrestling as a rule-breaker until, inspired by Andre the Giant and others, he devoted himself to the rules of

of their hearts, mistrust him. And he can never fully atone for all the broken legs and fractured arms.

Still, Mulligan tries desperately. Fans love him, peers respect him, commentators accord him attention. However, one particle of the past escapes his frenzied efforts.

Those he befriended, those he advised to break legs, the men he told to use illegal objects, and abuse fans, still come back to haunt him. Mulligan wonders if Masked Superstar II is one of his former friends, one of his former proteges.



After beating Blackjack Mulligan in the corner, Masked Superstar I tags off to Masked Superstar II to resume the attack. Mulligan remains baffled as to Superstar II's identity.

scientific wrestling. Along the way, Mulligan befriended both good and bad, called rule-breakers as friends, then enemies.

"Somewhere, I've met him," he insisted.

A man can control his friends, not acquaintances. Whoever this masked man is, wasn't a friend of Mulligan's. Perhaps an acquaintance...

Like many bad guys turned good, Mulligan is tormented with guilt over past misconduct. He knows he can never undo the vile actions. He knows fans will always, in some dark corner

"Everytime I hear about a rulebreaking young guy in an area I once wrestled in, my heart sinks into the pit of my gut," said Mulligan. "I get a queasy, sick feeling and want to lie down in the dark. I feel, and maybe I'm a little crazy, but this is the way I feel, that I'm somehow responsible for them."

"I'm not saying this out of any bragging, for God knows it's nothing to be proud of, but I was a much admired man among young rulebreakers. They'd come to me for advice. What kind of advice? How to conceal a foreign object, how to ruin a

man with one quick jab, how to shower vile obscenities on fans, little cute tricks like that.

"I always helped, always listened and offered my sage words of wisdom. Then I'd sit at ringside and watch my words translated into action. I'd laugh when my young friend tossed a foe over the ropes and bashed his skull into the concrete. I'd laugh and howl with delight when my young friend spit at fans in the front row. And I'd be beside myself if a young guy pulled a piece of steel outta his trunks and ripped open a forehead.

"Ah, I was sick back then, real messed up," said Mulligan, eyes moistening. "Few guys listened when I turned against rule-breaking. Maybe they believed what I'd always said about guys who turned good, that they were lame, cowards, not real men, afraid of mixing up in the ring and taking punishment."

"My own words haunted me. But this Masked Superstar II, I don't know, his manners, his gestures, I wish I could pin his identity down. I know the guy. I didn't hear him speak. But you know when you see a childhood friend or even someone you just went to school with after maybe 15 years? Guy has a beard, pot belly, but something lingers on, a voice, a walk."

"Same in this case. I haven't seen this guy in a while, not in weeks, maybe years. Same walk, same way of wrestling. Just can't determine who the hell he can be. Damned if it doesn't gnaw my insides," Mulligan said, shaking his head.

Masked Superstar II does know Blackjack Mulligan. Or so he says, in this terse, one line interview.

"Tell Mulligan, me and him are old friends. And thank him for all he taught me," he said, laughing maniacally. □

THE INSIDER

By STEVEN FARHOOD

SCOOP OF THE MONTH

Andre the Giant came within a few votes of being awarded the 1979 Ehrlich Peace Prize!

The popular wrestler received much consideration for the prestigious award because of his marvelous accomplishments in consistently keeping peace and order in the violent, unpredictable world of professional wrestling. No wrestlers have

won the award in the past.

Predictably, Andre is modest in discussing the details.

"The Ehrlich Peace Prize is a wonderful honor for any man to achieve," the wrestling hero said. "Needless to say, I would be more than flattered to win such an award. But I only go about doing my job in wrestling, and that job is to keep those evil rulebreakers in their place. Too many of them think they can rule the world because they are big or strong."

Just like some countries in the world, Andre?

"Well, sort of. I guess you could say that when certain countries get too pushy, America is always there to side with the underdog. I would always like it to be known that in wrestling, when anyone is pushed around for no good reason at all, the aggressor has to answer to Andre."

The news of Andre's consideration for the Peace Prize drew various responses from the wrestling community.

"Andre, Ehrlich Peace Prize nominee? Someone must be joking," commented Ken Patera. "That freak couldn't make peace if he was by himself on a deserted island."

"I think it is wonderful," said WWF champion Bob Backlund. "Andre's contribution to society, through wrestling, is unequalled. He deserves anything he gets."

"You tell me something like that, and then you want to know what's wrong with the world?" asked Captain Lou Albano. "We have a lot better chance for world peace the sooner they put Andre in some traveling freak show and keep him in a cage."

We don't care what anybody else says, Andre. And you shouldn't care either. Just keep up the good work. At least now you know you're appreciated by those who count.

(Continued on page 58)



Although Andre narrowly missed winning the prestigious Ehrlich Peace Prize, he is still the number one man in the eyes of his fans.

HOTSEAT

KEVIN VON ERICH: "I'M TIRED OF LIVING IN MY FAMILY'S SHADOW"

LIKE THE ROCKEFELLERS in finance, the Kennedys in politics, the Bee Gees in music, the Von Erich family is a leader in their chosen field. Currently three Von Erich boys wrestle for attention and titles: David, Kerry, and Kevin. Currently both Missouri State champion and American Heavyweight champion, Kevin hovers on the edge of a world title. Yet not all is light and airy with Kevin. In this interview, he tells why.)

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED
BY STU SAKS

Q: Kevin, I'd like to welcome you aboard the Hotseat.

A: Thanks, Stu, I've been looking forward to this.

Q: Yes, well, let's get right to the questions.

A: Sure thing.

Q: You're heir to a rather powerful tradition, the Von Erich family legacy.

A: I guess.

Q: You seem a little tentative.

A: Well, I'm not only a Von Erich, you know.

Q: Meaning?

A: That I can't always be com-

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You don't want to feel hostility to your own family, but sometimes, in this case, it's almost unavoidable.

”

pared to my brothers or father. I don't think that's fair to any of us.

Q: Is there bitterness?

A: Now you're fishing.

Q: No, just looking for the truth. If you'd really rather not discuss it...

A: Just that it'll come out wrong

in print.

Q: Kevin, on the Hotseat, it comes out *exactly* the way you say it. No editing at all.

A: Okay then. Ready?

Q: Tape's flyin'.

A: Well (long pause, frowns). I'm, I'm tired of living in my family's shadow. There, I said it.

Q: How long has that been building?

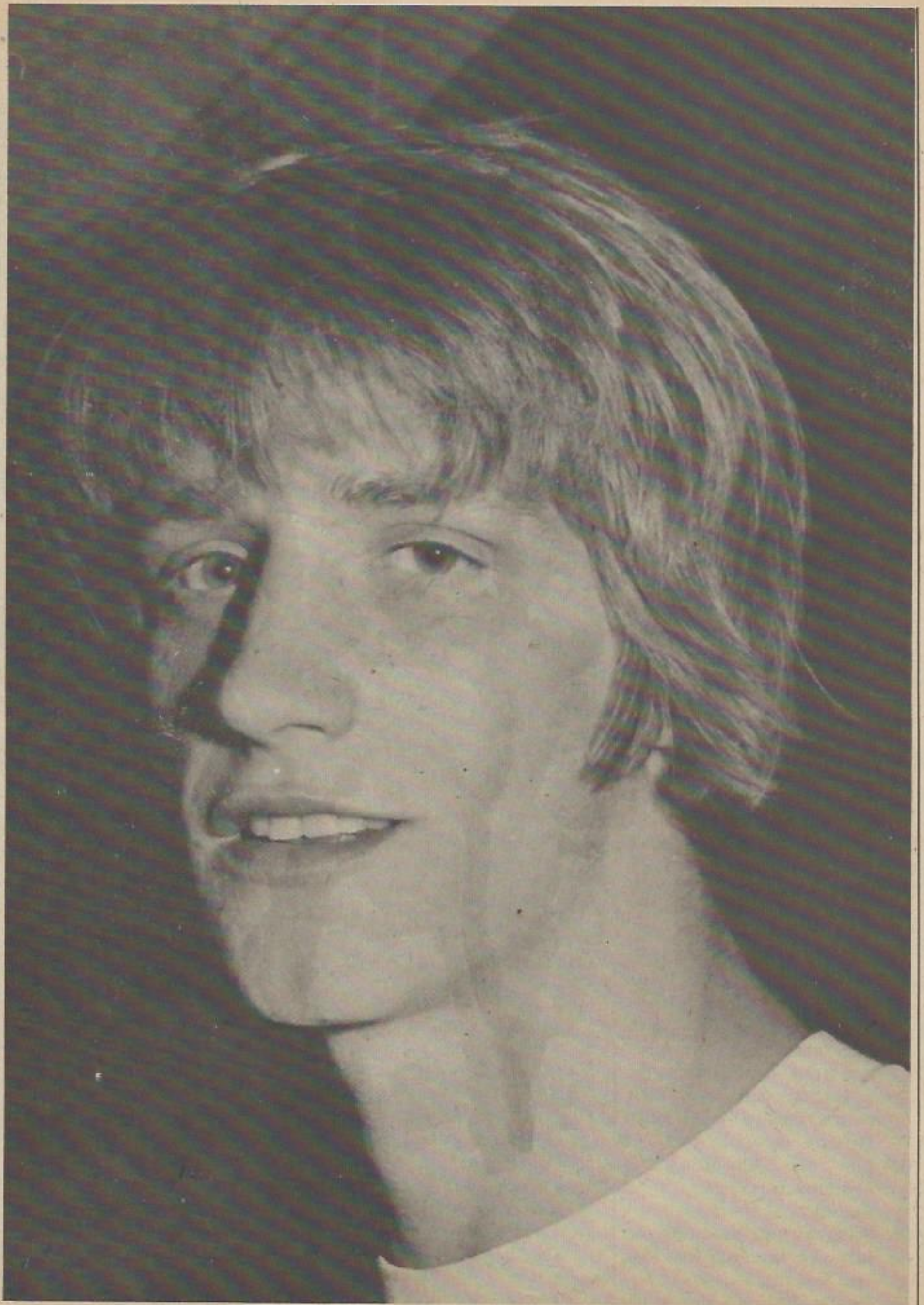
A: I guess since all the brothers were involved on a steady basis in wrestling. You'd hear, Kevin Von Erich, brother of David, son of Fritz, and so on.

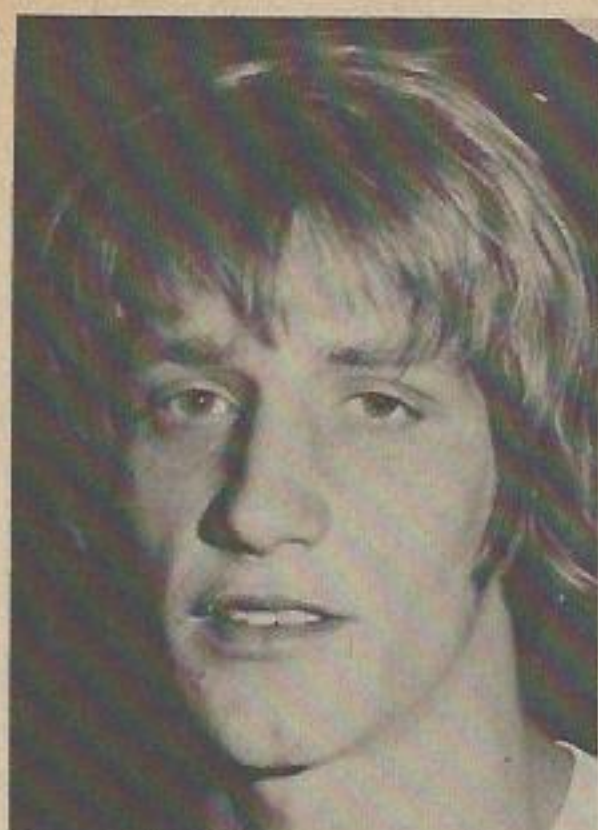
Q: And how would you feel?

A: At first happy, because I love them, then a little annoyed, then outright resentful followed by a really heavy guilt trip. You don't want to feel hostility to your own family, but sometimes, in this case, it's almost unavoidable.

Q: Did you ever talk to your father or brothers?

A: What could I say? That I want





“

I've gotta compile my own credentials, my own titles, always using the things my father taught me, never disgracing my family, but always looking to establish myself.

”

to be respected in my own right and not as some heir to some family throne? That I wanted to be known for *my* abilities and not what my family had or hasn't done. It's tough, because I'm extremely proud of my family.

Q: Then what do you do?

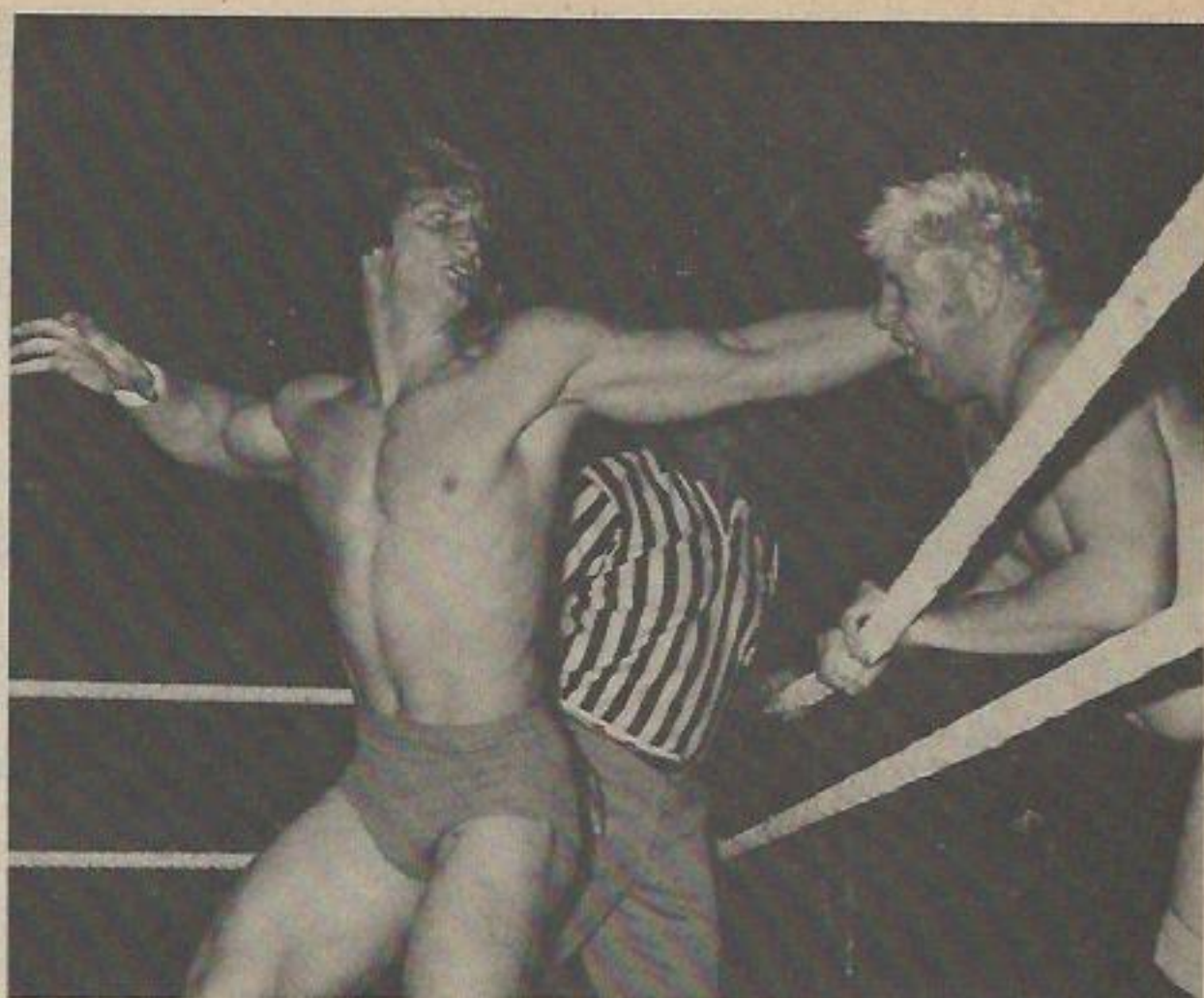
A: I don't know. This is a dilemma. As best as I can figure, I've gotta compile my own credentials, my own titles, always using the things my father taught me, never disgracing my family, but always looking to establish myself in my own right.

Q: Like the American and Missouri titles.

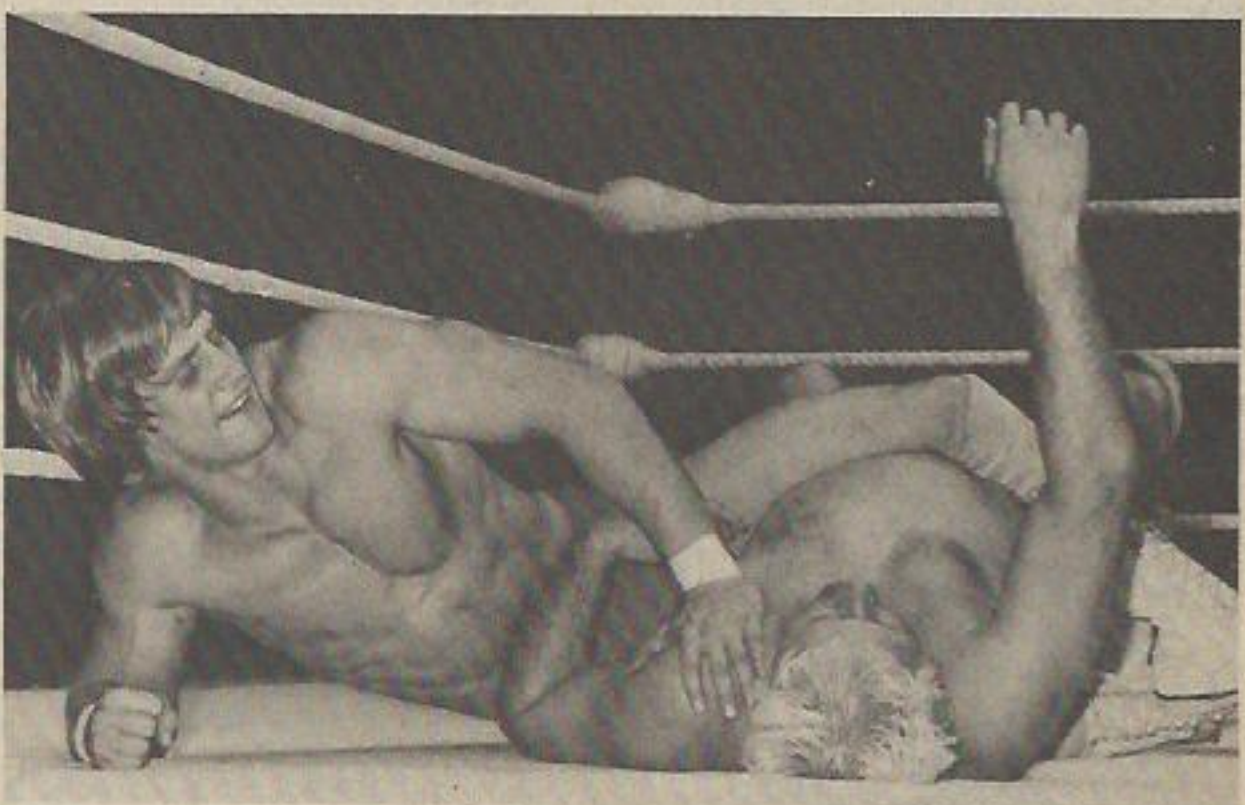
A: Exactly.

Q: What was the sensation the very first time you won that very first title?

A: Oh (laughs). It's simply in-



Kevin Von Erich throws an open right hand at Dick Murdoch, who stands on the ring apron (above). Kevin wraps his muscular legs around Murdoch's midsection (below). The young Von Erich believes Murdoch would be far better off if he wrestled by the rulebook.



credible, such an amazing rush of exhilaration and ecstasy. For a little while, you're really soaring. You know, that cliché about being on cloud nine, well, it's kinda like that. You're pumped up and can't ever imagine feeling blue again. And the sensation of true achievement.

Q: Let's take this all in order.

A: Okay.

A: The Missouri title.

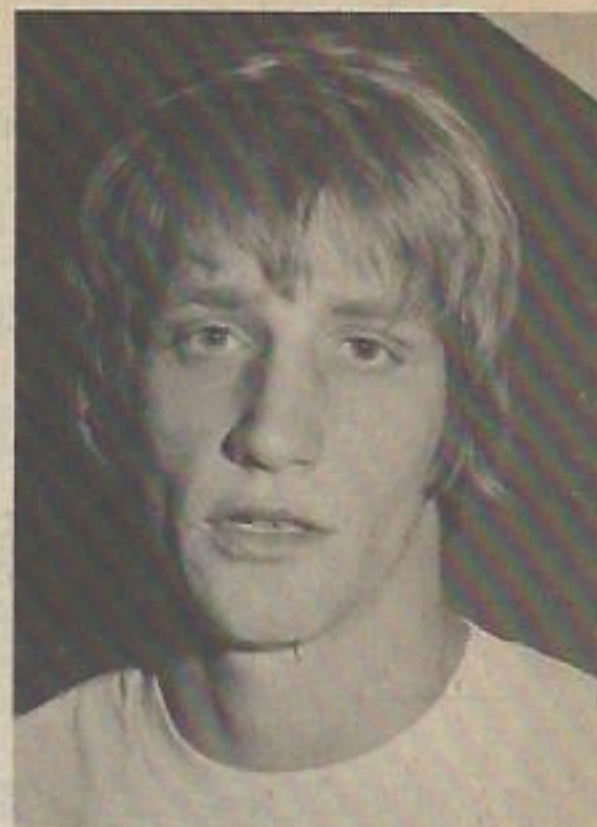
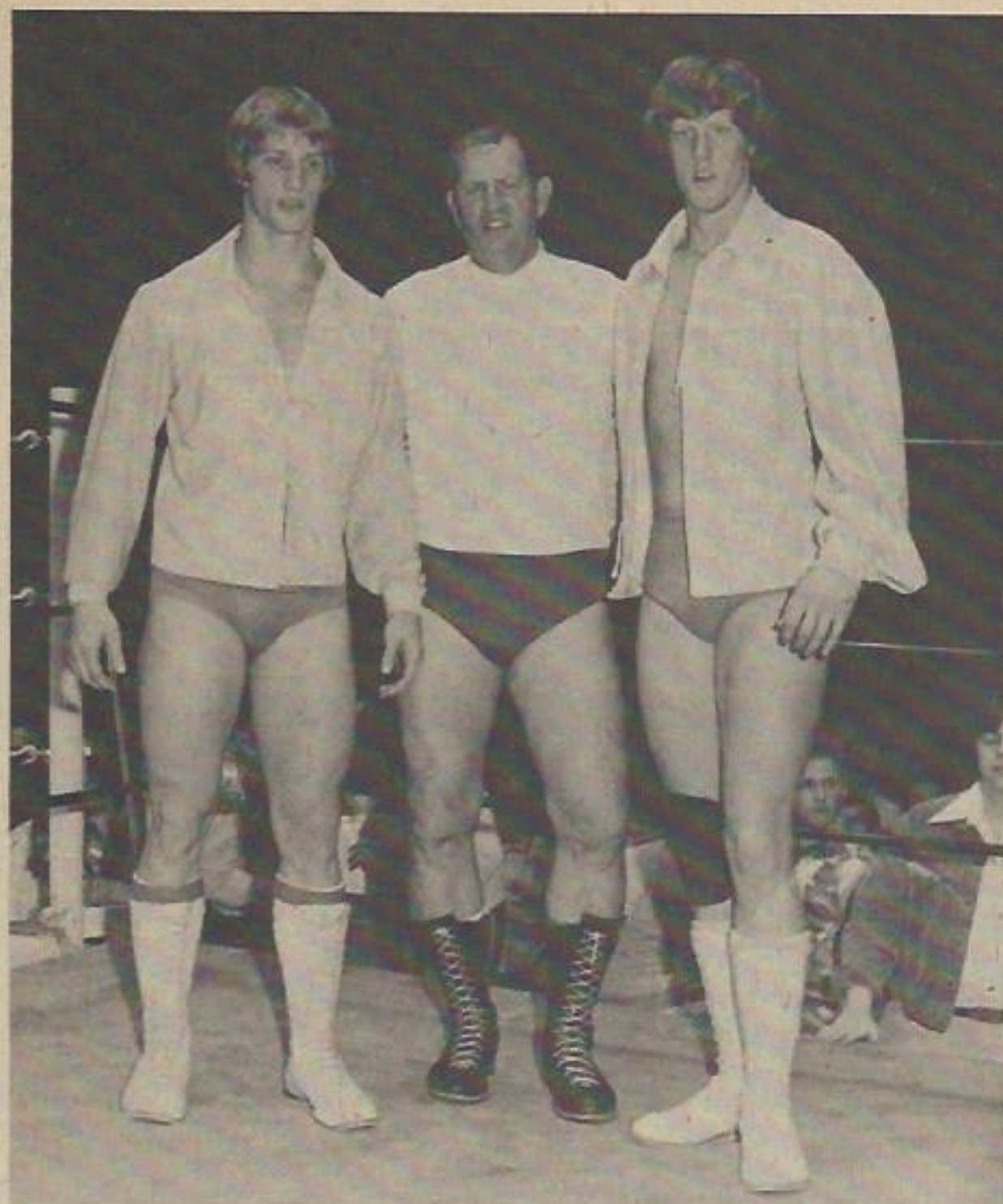
A: And Dick Murdoch?

Q: What about him?

A: Guy's totally devoted to his craft. Sadly, he's such a sickening rulebreaker. If only he'd bring that dedication and determination as a true scientific wrestler, well, I think the sky's the limit. But he won't get back the title.

Q: In Texas, you're up against the champ.

A: Among others.



“

Shocked the hell outta ol' Harley when young whipper-snapper Kevin comes along and bounces him on the head. You'll notice Race has tempered his remarks a little.

”

Q: Gary Hart?

A: That guy doesn't belong in the sport. Filthy parasite feeding off other people, counseling destruction, spreading hate. I can't stomach guys like that.

A: You and Gino Hernandez have had your share of battles.

A: More than our share, Stu. I don't know, Hernandez, there's something wrong with him, ah, a screw loose or something. He's got it in for my family. No one gets away with dumping on the Von Erichs.

Q: He's another one who might have been a brilliant scientific wrestler.

A: Absolutely. But he's twisted with hate and jealousy. It's too bad.

Q: In the end, the one man you want is Harley Race.

A: Very badly.

The first family of wrestling, Kevin, Fritz, and David (above). In the family tradition, Kevin applies the clawhold, but Murdoch is not inside the ropes (below).



Q: Now you beat him in tag team competition and wrestled him to a draw in individual competition.

A: That's right. Shocked the hell outta ol' Harley when young whipper-snapper Kevin comes along and bounces him on his head. You'll notice Race has tempered his remarks a little.

Q: Not really.

A: Well, call it respect. Race, like many other, have accepted me as a genuine contender. Everything else, the words, all that, really doesn't matter.

Q: As long as you're respected, right?

A: Far as I'm concerned, respect is the name of the wrestling game.

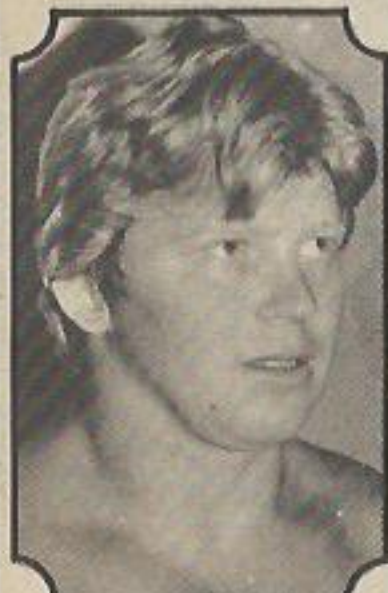
Q: Kevin, I want to thank you for this interview.

A: Been a delight, Stu. □

INSIDE WRESTLING'S OFFICIAL RATINGS

These Ratings Are Compiled With The Assistance Of Top Wrestlers, Promoters,
And Reporters. They Are Universally Accepted As Official

World Wrestling Federation

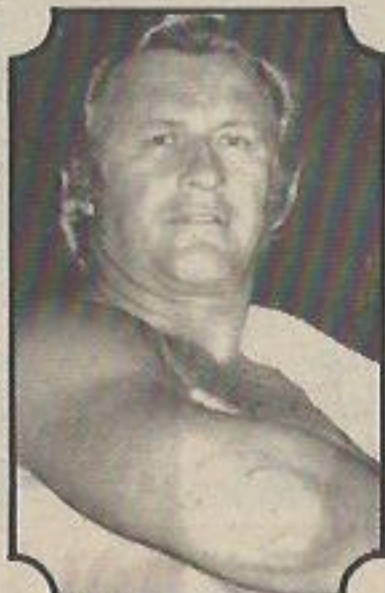


Champion: BOB BACKLUND



1—HULK HOGAN

American Wrestling Association



Champion: NICK BOCKWINKEL



1—DINO BRAVO

National Wrestling Alliance



Champion: HARLEY RACE



1—MR. WRESTLING II

Most Popular Wrestlers



1—BRUNO SAMMARTINO



2—DUSTY RHODES

Most Hated Wrestlers



1—LARRY ZBYSZKO

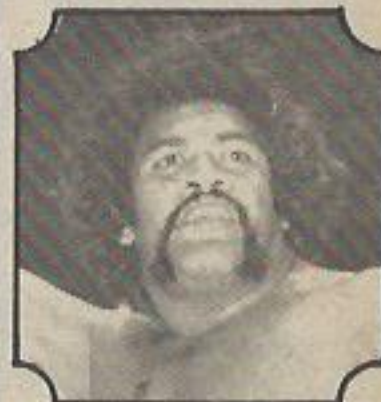


2—HULK HOGAN

Tag Teams



1— THE SAMOANS





2—KEN PATERA



3—LARRY ZBYSZKO



4—IVAN PUTSKI

5—PAT PATTERSON
6—TONY ATLAS
7—TOR KAMATA
8—TITO SANTANA
9—SIKA THE SAMOAN
10—BOBBY DUNCUM



2—CRUSHER



3—VERNE GAGNE



4—GREG GAGNE

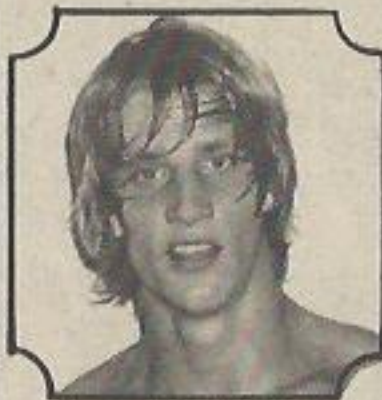
5—MAD DOG
VACHON
6—BILLY ROBINSON
7—JESSE VENTURA
8—SUPER
DESTROYER II
9—CRUSHER
BLACKWELL
10—ADRIAN ADONIS



2—DUSTY RHODES



3—JIMMY SNUKA



4—KEVIN VON ERICH

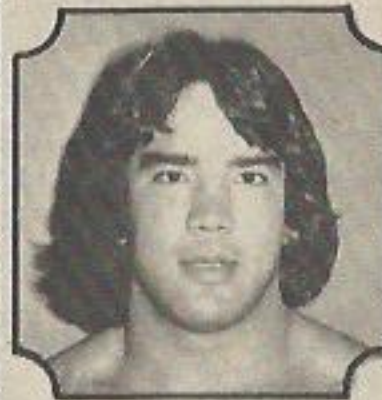
5—DON MURACO
6—JIM BRUNZELL
7—STAN STASIAK
8—AUSTIN IDOL
9—RIC FLAIR
10—THE ASSASSIN



3—BOB BACKLUND



4—ANDRE THE GIANT



5—RICK STEAMBOAT

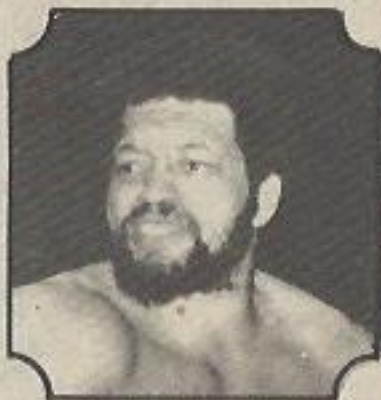
6—PAT PATTERSON
7—MR. WRESTLING II
8—IVAN PUTSKI
9—KEVIN VON ERICH
10—WAHOO McDANIEL



3—TERRY FUNK



4—KEN PATERA

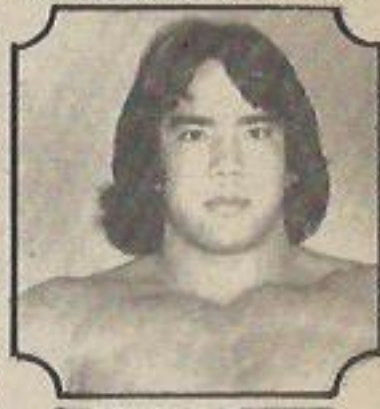


5—ERNIE LADD

6—MASKED
SUPERSTAR
7—ABDULLAH THE
BUTCHER
8—GREG VALENTINE
9—EDDY MANSFIELD
10—OX BAKER



2—VERNE GAGNE &
MAD DOG VACHON



3—RICK STEAMBOAT
& JAY YOUNGBLOOD



4—IVAN PUTSKI &
TITO SANTANA
5—IVAN KOLOFF &
ALEXIS SMIRNOFF
6—BRYAN ST. JOHN
& STANLEY LANE
7—JACK BRISCO &
JIM GARVIN
8—MR. HITO & MR.
SAKURADA
9—ERNIE LADD &
BRUISER BRODIE
10—TOMMY & EDDIE
GILBERT



REVENGE!

"AN ARM FOR AN SAYS DUSTY RHODES"

Prior to his NWA title defense against Harley Race, Dusty Rhodes' arm was broken in a sneak attack by Terry Funk (above). Dusty wrestled with the broken arm and lost the title. He vowed revenge and got it when he broke Funk's wrist (opposite right).

AN EYE FOR an eye. A tooth for a tooth. An arm for an arm. Vengeance. From the times of the Bible to the days of Dusty Rhodes, that principle has been unrelenting, unyielding, ruthless. You get me, I get you. Ask

Terry Funk. Ask Dusty Rhodes. Ask their doctors.

"I been waitin' a long, long time for this," said Rhodes. "Ever since that bum broke my arm, I been waitin' for my revenge."

Less than a year ago, then NWA champion Dusty Rhodes' arm was broken by Terry Funk prior to a title match against Harley Race. The arm healed, the title was lost, the scars remain.

"How could I ever forget or

forgive what he done?" asked Rhodes. "Wasn't like there was any excuse at all for it. He did it out of pure evil, man, just 'cause he likes to hurt other people, 'cause he's nothin' but a coward, always has been and always will."

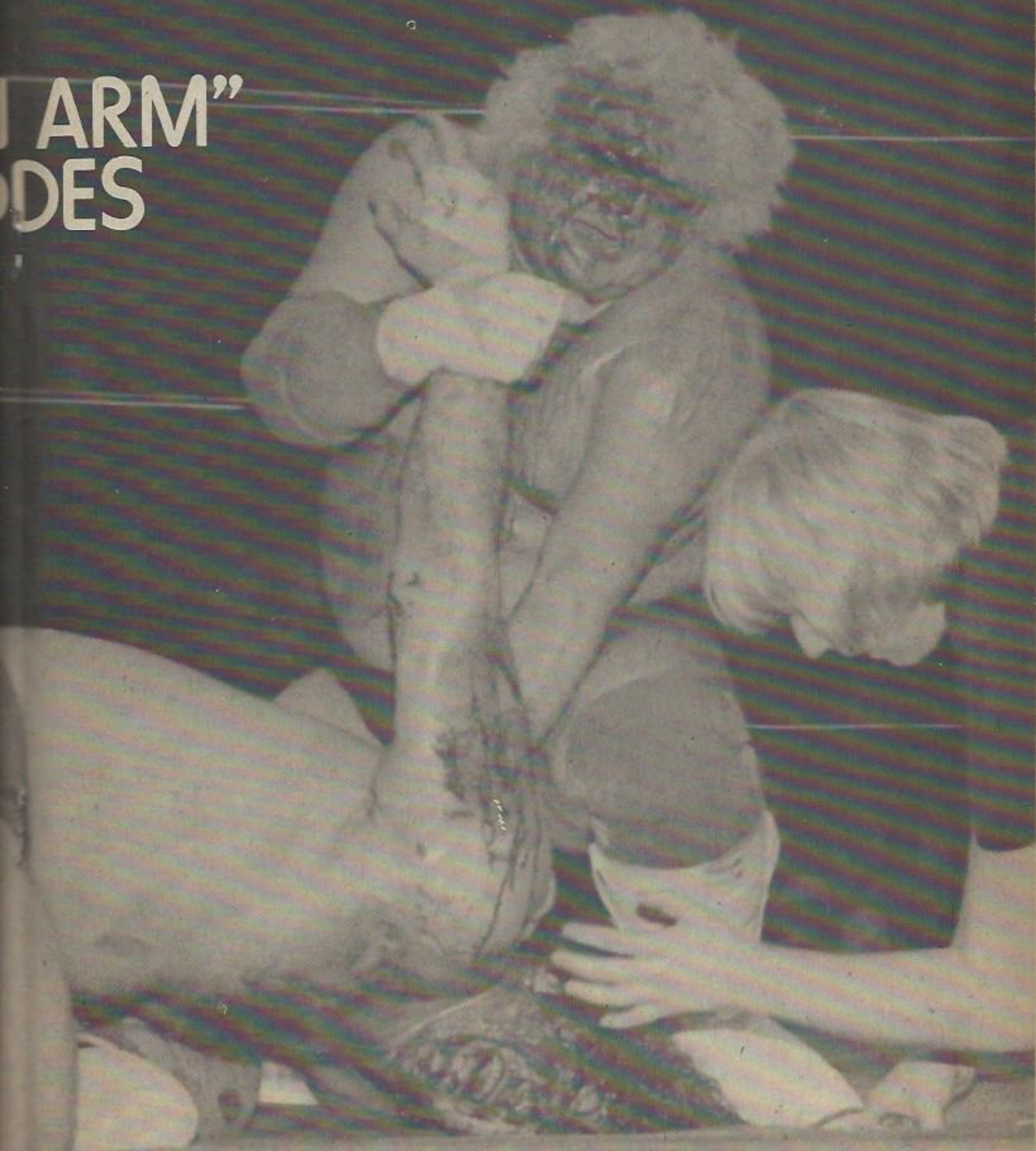
Rhodes' career suffered in the ensuing months. Many saw a trauma, saw Rhodes permanently disabled from that shocking attack.

(Continued on page 54)

Vengeance! Dusty Rhodes waited months for this night, endless days filled with painful brooding, tormented wondering and self-doubt. Vengeance! Dusty Rhodes savored the prospect of inflicting the same hideous suffering upon Terry Funk that he sustained last August, when an arm, a title, and a dream was broken

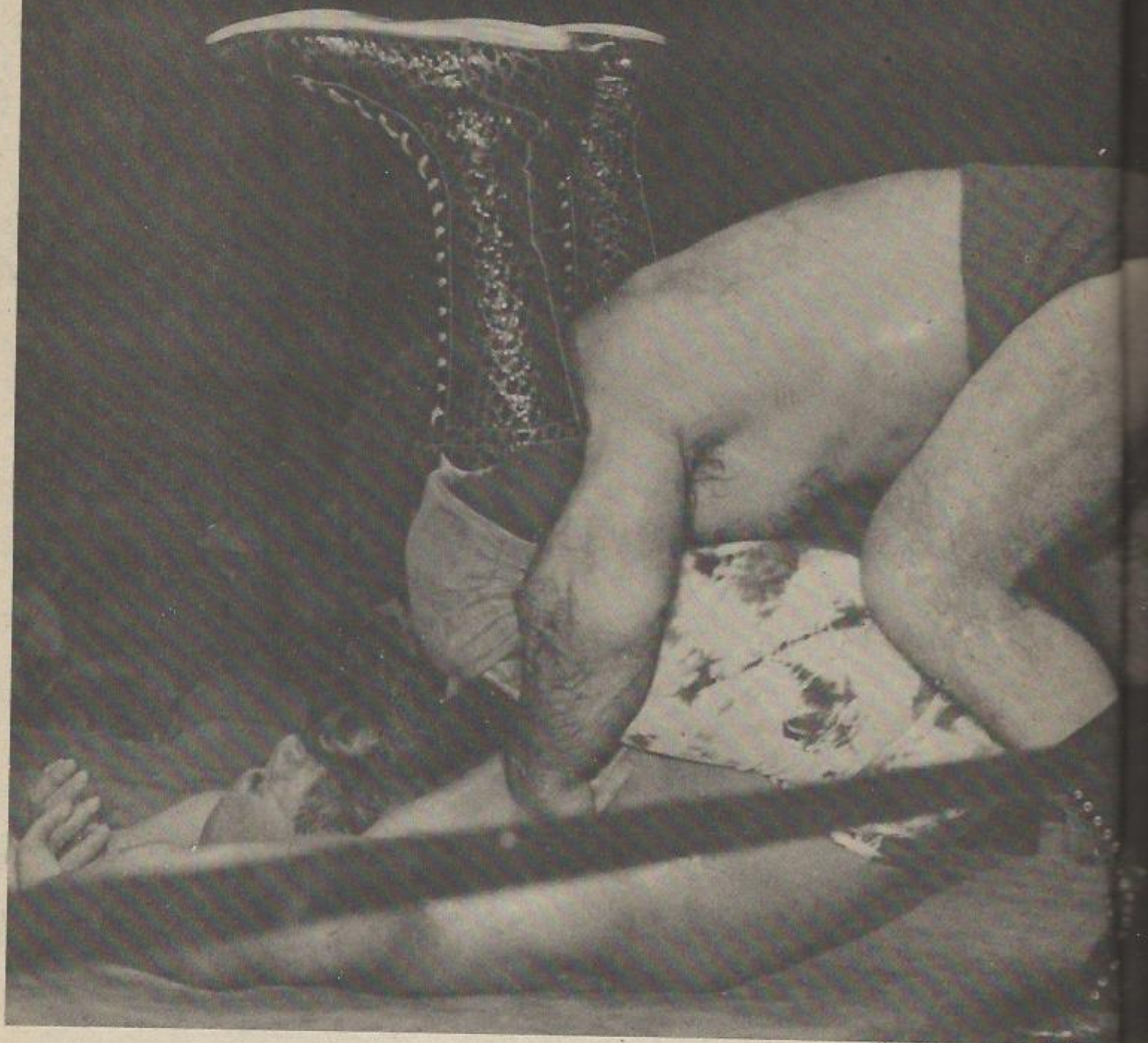


ARM"
DES



Exposé

Was Bruno Sammartino's pin of Superstar Graham illegal? The photo does not conclusively determine where Bruno's right foot was when the referee made his count.



**BRUNO NEEDED ILLEGAL
TO DEFEAT SUPERSTAR**



LEGAL HELP STAR GRAHAM

Veteran journalist Matt Brock couldn't resist this sizzling story. Its implications stretched throughout every corridor of professional wrestling, unnerving devoted fans, stunning even the most hardened of ringside cynics. Could Bruno Sammartino have resorted to an illegal hold for a mere win?

(Luck often determines a great story or someone else's exclusive. As fate would have it, Matt Brock was on vacation in Houston, visiting an old friend. The temptation of seeing Bruno Sammartino and Superstar Billy Graham wage war proved irresistible, and Brock and his friend went to the match. What Brock witnessed may stun the entire civilized world!)

BY MATT BROCK

MY OLD COLLEGE roommate and I spent many nights celebrating and rejoicing, sharing old stories and old Scotch. Hah, you didn't think Matt went to school? Well, I went to three colleges, so there. Of course, I never graduated, but what's a diploma. I've made my mark in the world, though most mornings I can't find it.

Houston's a fine city, one of those new Sun Belt towns which seemed to spring up overnight. When I'm on vacation, I don't like to think about business. Only Scotch and cowgirls, both of which old Matt and his buddy found plenty of in Houston.

(Continued on page 56)

NEWS FROM THE

If you would like your area of the country represented in these reports, while also being officially credited with your own by-line, send us reports of the matches you attend. You will have the thrill of seeing your name in an internationally known magazine while at the same time helping to improve the quality of wrestling in your area. So why not give it a try? You will be glad you did!

Send your reports to: Correspondent Editor, Box 48, Rockville Centre, N.Y. 11571.

RICHMOND, VA

By Robby Schini



RIC FLAIR
vs.
JIMMY SNUKA

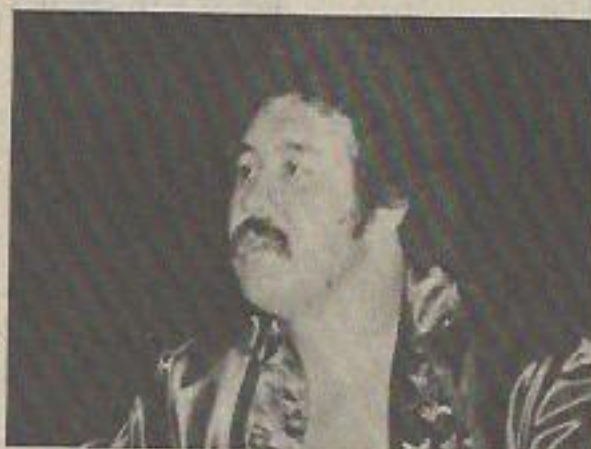


This match at the Richmond Coliseum embroiled Ric Flair and Jimmy Snuka in a real battle, a Texas Death Match. Flair taunted Snuka and his manager, Gene Anderson. Even before the bell rang, Flair seized Snuka's U.S. championship belt and swung it at Anderson. During the match, Anderson was ordered to leave ringside. Despite Snuka's attempts to bite Flair's head, Ric emerged victorious.

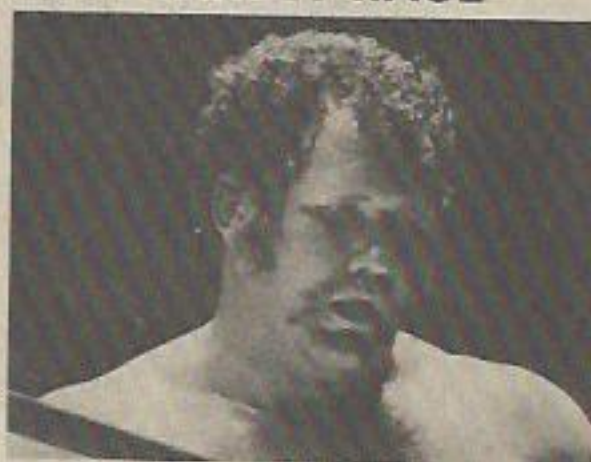
OTHER BOUTS: Rufus R. Jones and Johnny Weaver won a tough match over Swede Hanson and Dewey Robertson. Greg Valentine and Ray Stevens won by disqualification over Jay Youngblood and Rick Steamboat.

ST. PETERSBURG FL

By Keith Tait



MANNY FERNANDEZ
vs.
HARLEY RACE



Manny Fernandez had his big chance: a match against Harley Race for the NWA title. Manny grabbed control of the match at the very beginning, relying on fluid scientific moves. A magnificent cross body block bowled over Race, enabling Manny to pin the champion for the title. But the referee got knocked over, couldn't see the pin, didn't count and, by the time he recovered, Race was up. Finally, an enraged Fernandez charged Race, missed and crashed over the ropes onto the concrete floor, knocking him unconscious.

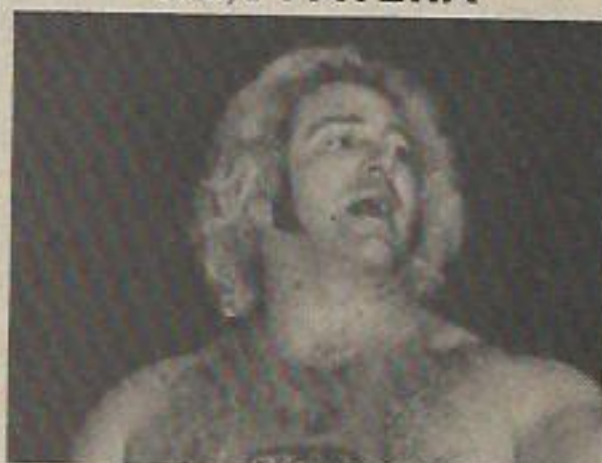
OTHER BOUTS: Dusty Rhodes and Dick Murdoch whipped Leroy Brown and Ernie Ladd.

TORRINGTON, CT

By Bobby Kent



IVAN PUTSKI
vs.
KEN PATERA



What could be rougher and tougher than a match between Ivan Putski and Ken Patera? Each man used brilliant scientific maneuvers and old-fashioned hard-nosed grappling. Near the end, Putski snared Patera in a Polish bearhug. After an out-of-breath Patera refused to submit, he managed to wriggle free and apply a full-nelson. Putski collapsed against the ropes and Patera released him. Yet, when the bout degenerated into a brawl, and the referee was knocked out of the ring, a double disqualification was ordered.

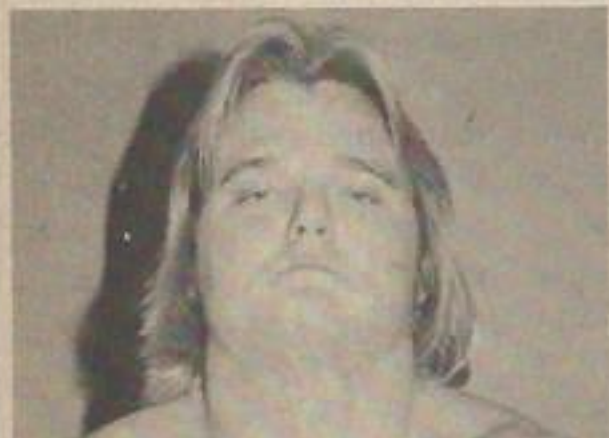
OTHER BOUTS: Steve King drew with Jose Estrada. Bob Duncum halted Rene Goulet.

WRESTLING CAPITALS



TORONTO, CANADA

By David Booth



GREG VALENTINE
vs.
DEWEY ROBERTSON



The Canadian Heavyweight title was up for grabs when former champion Greg Valentine confronted current champ Dewey Robertson. Valentine worked on Robertson's right leg by bending it over the ropes. Dewey's courage kept him from submitting. Miraculously, he started a powerful comeback. Desperate, Valentine forced a disqualification of himself by choking Robertson on the ropes. **OTHER BOUTS:** The Destroyer and the Blue Demon stopped Pedro Morales and Don Kernodle . . . Bob Marcus won over Bill White . . . Klondike Bill stopped Tim Gerrard.

SPARTANBURG, SC

By Jason Gwinn



MASKED SUPERSTAR
vs.
BLACKJACK MULLIGAN



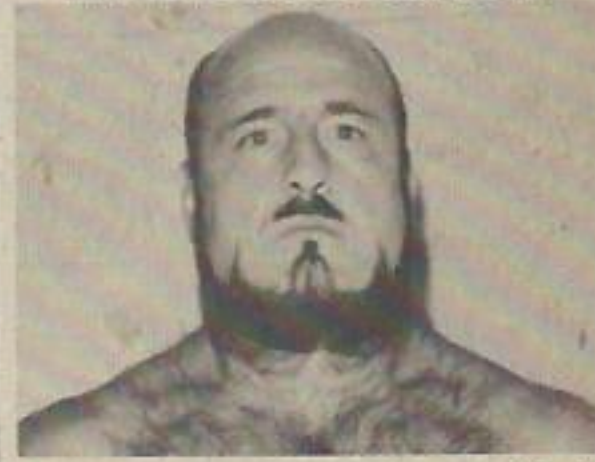
The main event featured Masked Superstar trying to collect John Studd's bounty on Blackjack Mulligan's head. The match went back and forth with little control until Superstar threw Mulligan out of the ring. He tried to slam Mulligan's head into the ring posts, but Mulligan reversed. Blood covered Superstar's mask. Mulligan flipped him into the ring and tried to lock the claw. Superstar, however, countered and locked the cobra. Again, Mulligan reversed and locked the claw. Sensing defeat, partner Masked Superstar II attacked Mulligan with a chair, nearly breaking Blackjack's hand and causing Masked Superstar's immediate disqualification.

LA CROSSE, WI

By Dennis Kollmansberger



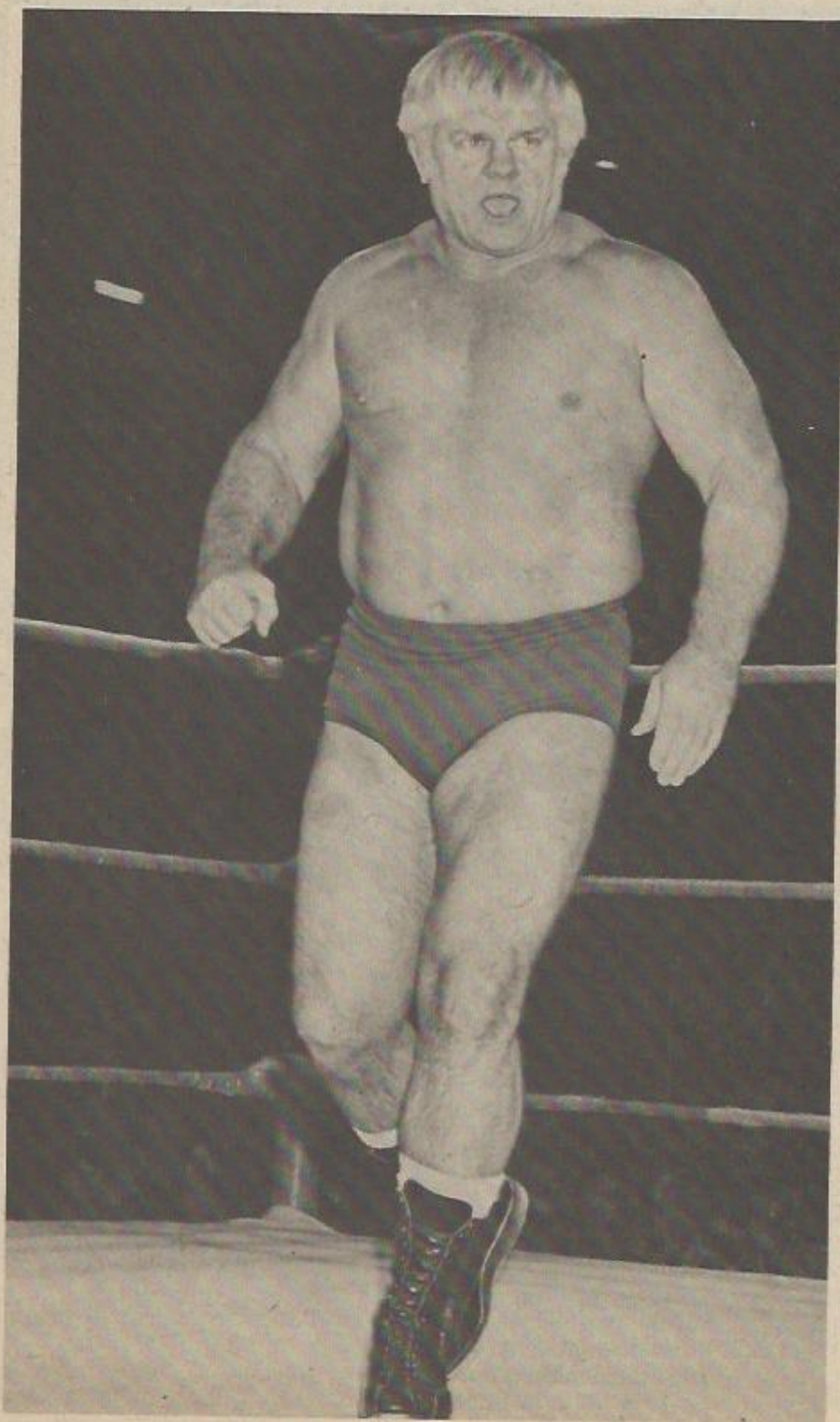
NICK BOCKWINKEL
vs.
MAD DOG VACHON



With the "no-disqualification" rule in effect, AWA champ Nick Bockwinkel met challenger Mad Dog Vachon in a brutal bout. The match took on the form of a brawl with Vachon slightly ahead. With Bockwinkel dancing in and out of the ring, a frustrated Vachon took his anger out on manager Bobby Heenan. Catching Heenan inside the ring, Vachon pummeled him, not realizing Bockwinkel had returned. Flying off the top rope, Bockwinkel put Vachon down for the victory.

OTHER BOUTS: Super Destroyer Mark III won a grudge match over Bobby Heenan . . . Jesse Ventura and Adrian Adonis stopped Dino Bravo and Steve Olsonowski . □

HAS VERNE GAGNE DUMPED MAD DOG VACHON?



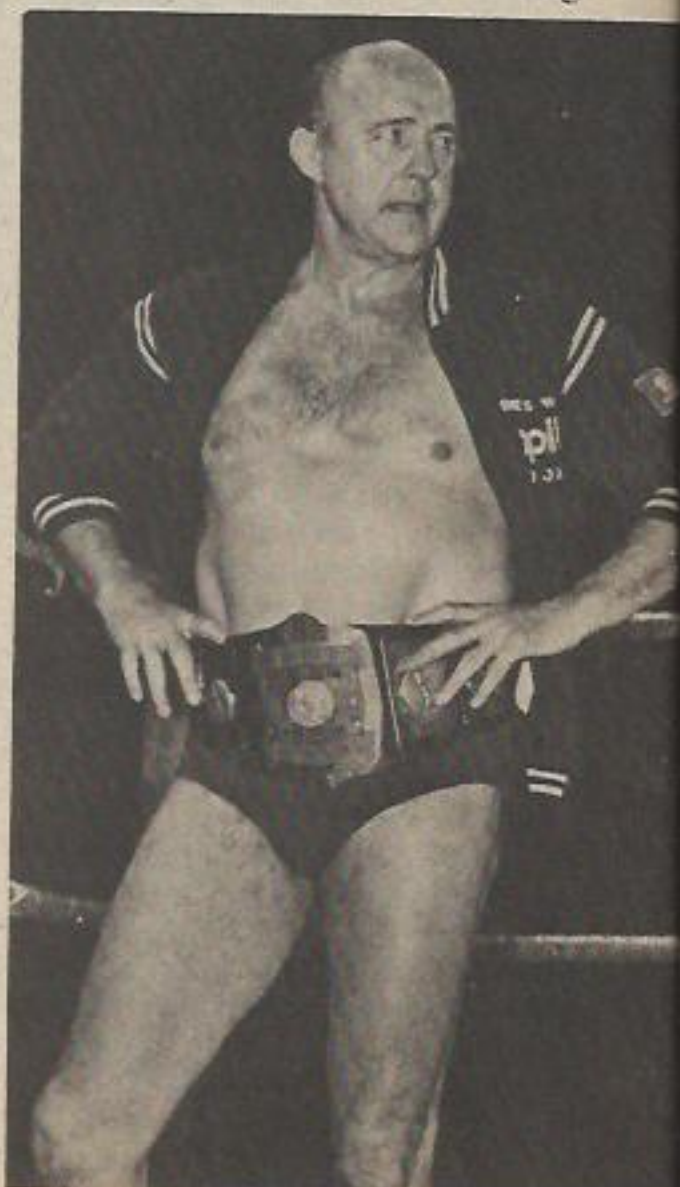
ONE YEAR AGO, the sight of Verne Gagne and Mad Dog Vachon calmly eating dinner together in a restaurant, and not having a food fight near the salad bar, would have been unlikely, perhaps impossible.

They were mortal enemies, sworn to avenge countless crimes committed against each other in the squared circle. Merely mentioning their name exacted a loud, often deranged response.

"That Gagne. I'd like to pull his eyes out," said Vachon on more than one occasion.

"Vachon turns my stomach," snapped Gagne.

Ah, life can be so strange.



Rumor or fact? Are the seers correct in their forecast of inevitable trouble between Verne Gagne and Mad Dog Vachon? Is this a mere squabble over strategy, something all partners encounter? Or are the AWA tag team champions about ready to do split up?

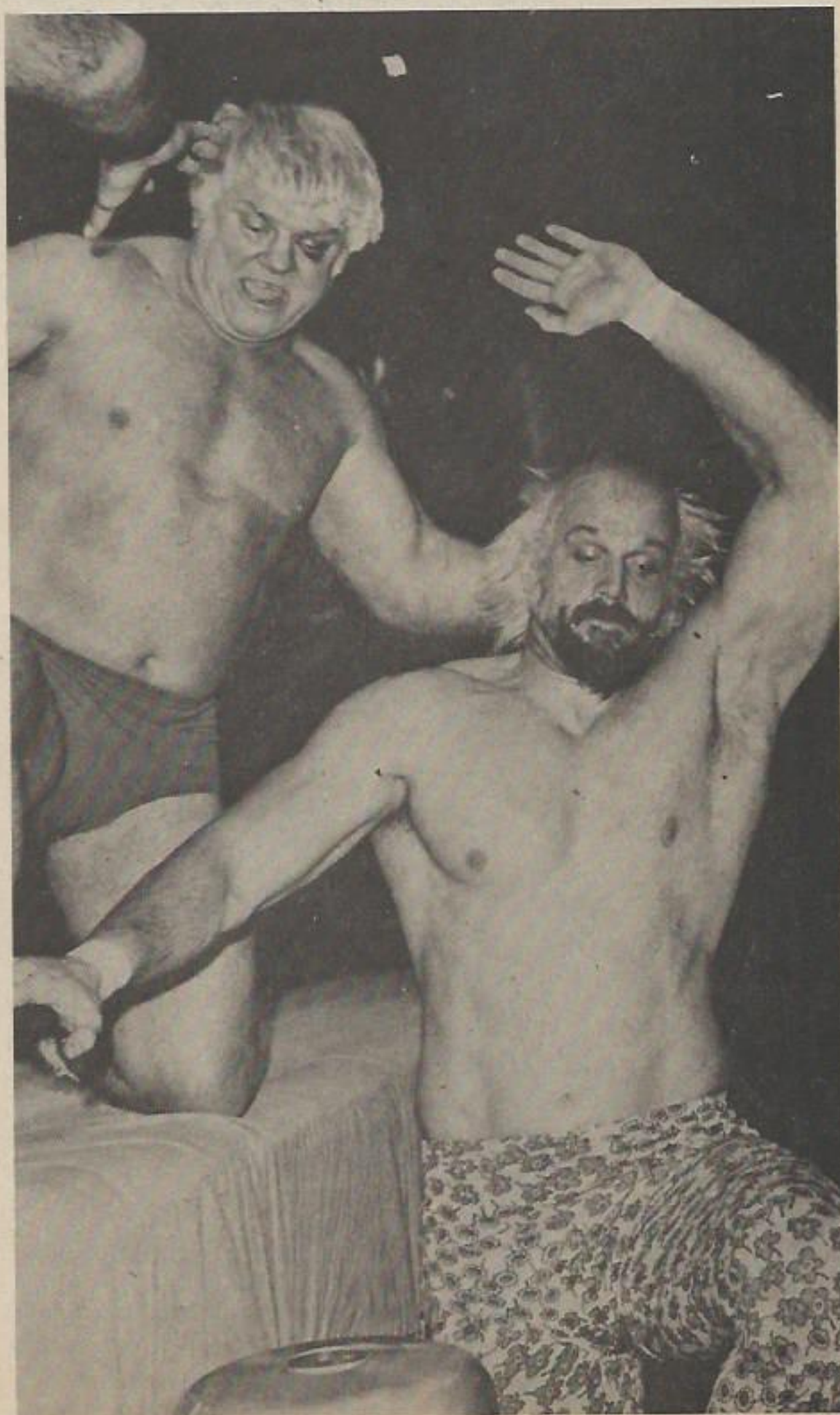
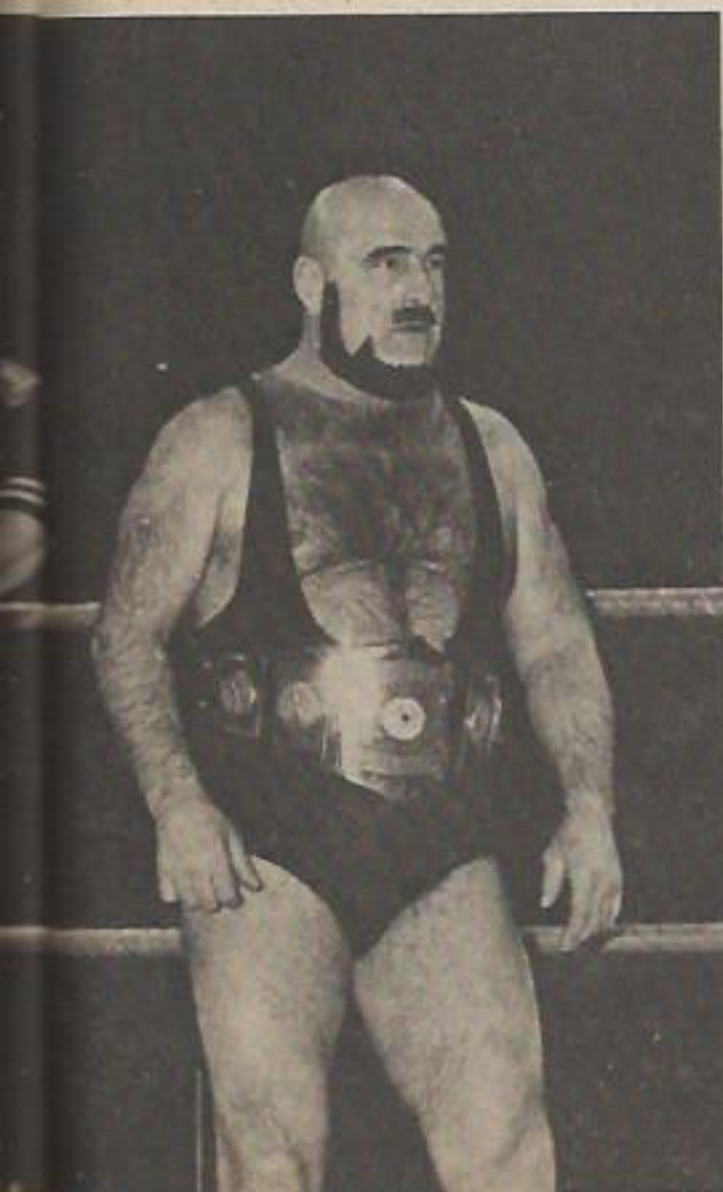
Common enemies tend to obscure the lines of hatred. Suddenly Vachon and Gagne perceive a tag team to be in their mutual self-interests. Wariness gives way to grudging acceptance, then friendship. Maneuvers become polished, styles blend together, a championship is captured.

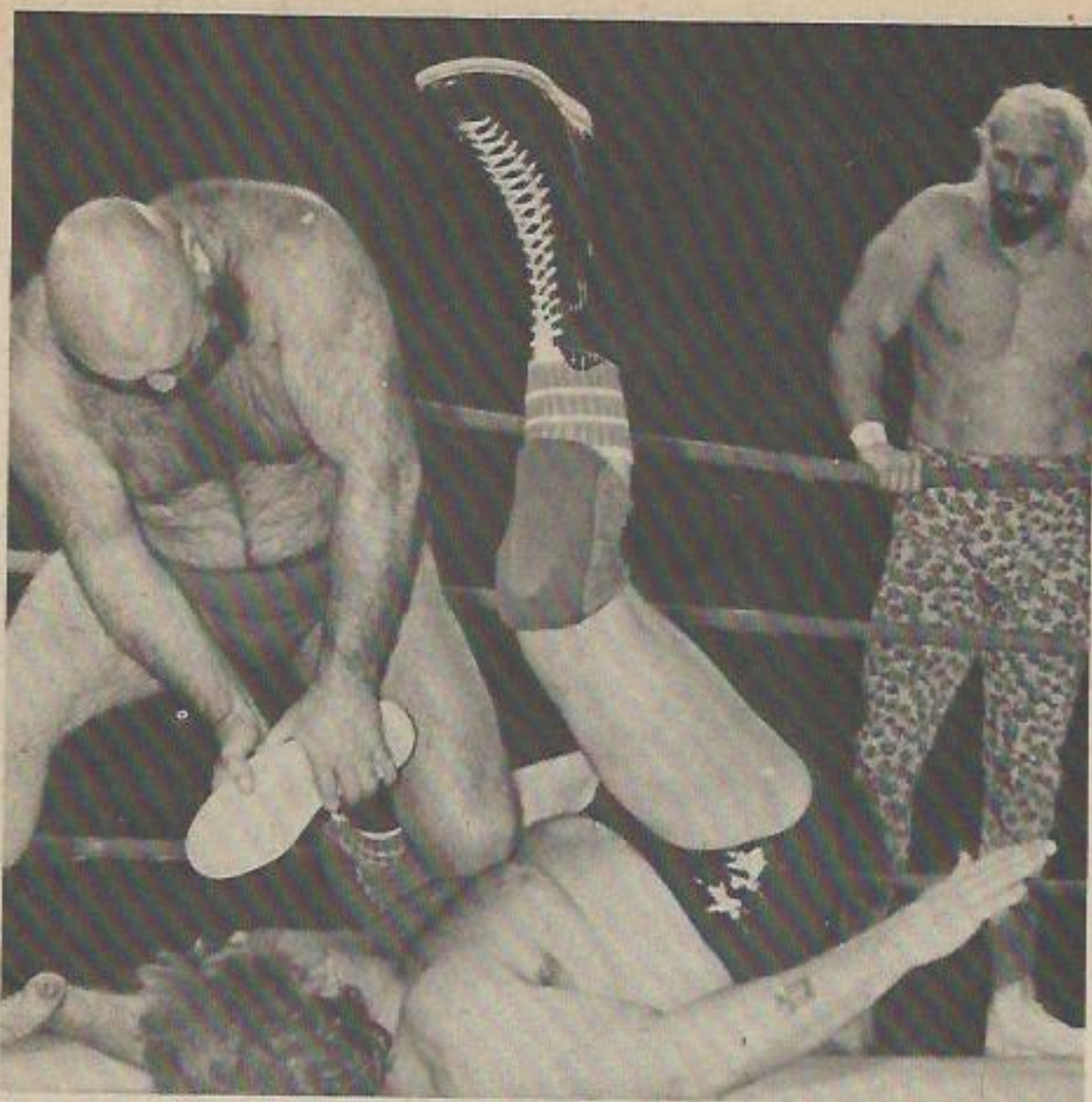
"Best there ever was," snapped Vachon.

"We showed them," said Verne.

Despite outward harmony, the

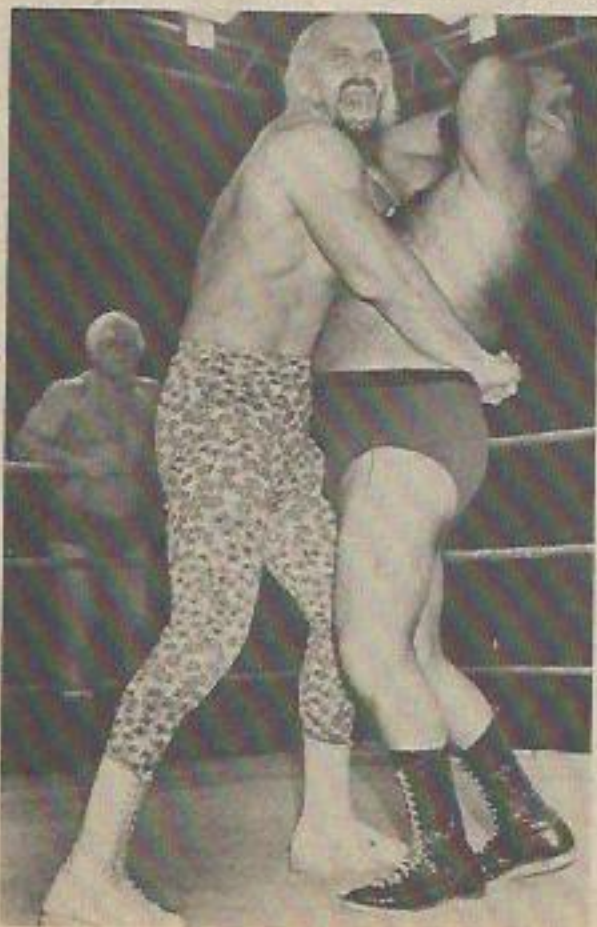
Has Crusher (opposite left) come between AWA tag team champions Verne Gagne and Mad Dog Vachon (below)? Displaying a style Mad Dog is well-accustomed to, Crusher slams Jesse Ventura's head into the bell (right).





Vachon claimed that he wrestled with Crusher because Gagne was out of town. He and Crusher, however, form a more natural combination, he said. Mad Dog applies pressure to a stepover toehold on Adrian Adonis (above). Ventura has Mad Dog breathless from a bearhug (below).

public doubted this team would last. Innumerable stories appeared about creeping unfriendliness between the two. Each time, Gagne and Vachon vehemently denied it, often ascribing the source of such rumors to hated rival Bobby



Heenan.

"I had nothing to do with any rumors," said Heenan, conveying apparent sincerity.

Heenan didn't lie. He had *little* to do with public skepticism about the Vachon-Gagne championship team. This ran too deep, cut across ethnic, age, and religious lines. People had trouble accepting two men of such diverse backgrounds on one team.

"When me and Verne first started talkin' about formin' a team, we knew fans wouldn't want to accept us," said Vachon. "People don't like to think two guys like us who used to hate each other could ever be friends or partners. Hell, we proved 'em wrong."

For a while. Until pressure built and pushed them apart, turning little disagreements into outright arguments. A source close to the team offered this assessment.

"I don't think either Vachon or

Gagne were prepared for the puzzled fan reaction," said the source. "They figure stars could get away with anything, simply because they were stars."

"See, both men saw this partnership as mutually benefiting their careers. Then, if differences could be patched up and papered over, they'd have a great shot at becoming a legendary team. Maybe fans wouldn't understand, but you don't have to like each other for a really effective tag team. It helps, but isn't necessary."

Does that mean Vachon and Gagne aren't bosom buddies?

"Well, they don't barbecue together," said the source.

That leads to the next stage in this bizarre relationship. Recently, Vachon wrestled with Crusher as his partner. One, two, several times. Where was Verne Gagne?

"Gagne was out of town," said Vachon.

According to Gagne, he was not asked to wrestle with Vachon.

"My phone must've been busy talking business, you know how it is," said Verne. "But if Mad Dog really wanted me to wrestle with him, he could've sent a telegram or a messenger."

In Vachon's bouts as Crusher's partner, he showed something he rarely demonstrated with Gagne. Joy.

"Me and Crusher have a good time, wrestlin' and breakin' heads, hoistin' a few," said Vachon, grinning. "No worryin' about a fancy maneuver or bein' delicate, anything like that. We just go out and crack heads together, step on faces and laugh, brother, laugh."

That is the Mad Dog Vachon fans have grown accustomed to, a style opposite that of Gagne's. Does this mean Vachon can no longer team with Verne Gagne?

"We're still champs," said Vachon. "For now."

If a breakup is imminent, Gagne knows nothing about it.

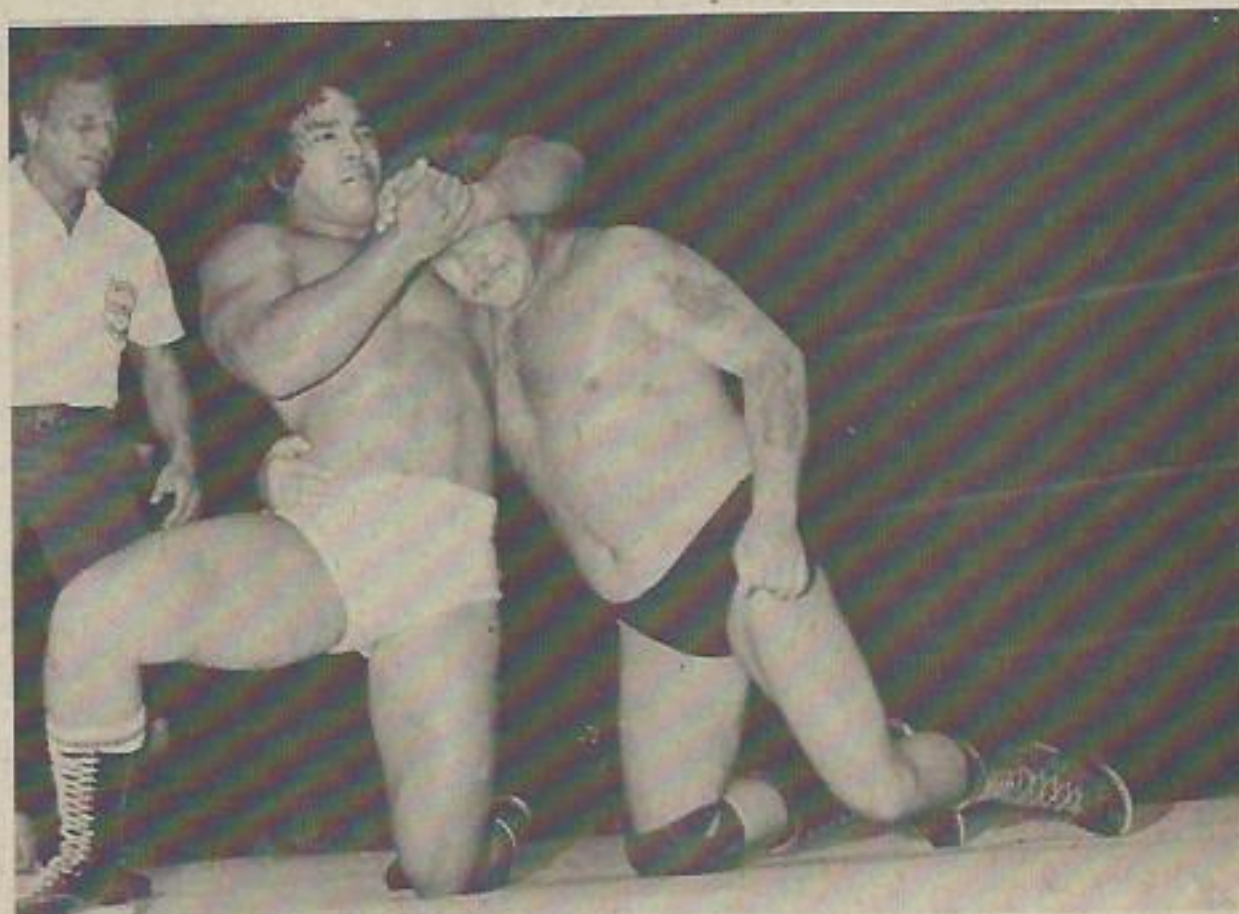
"Far as I know, we're defending the title next week." □

INSIDE WRESTLING

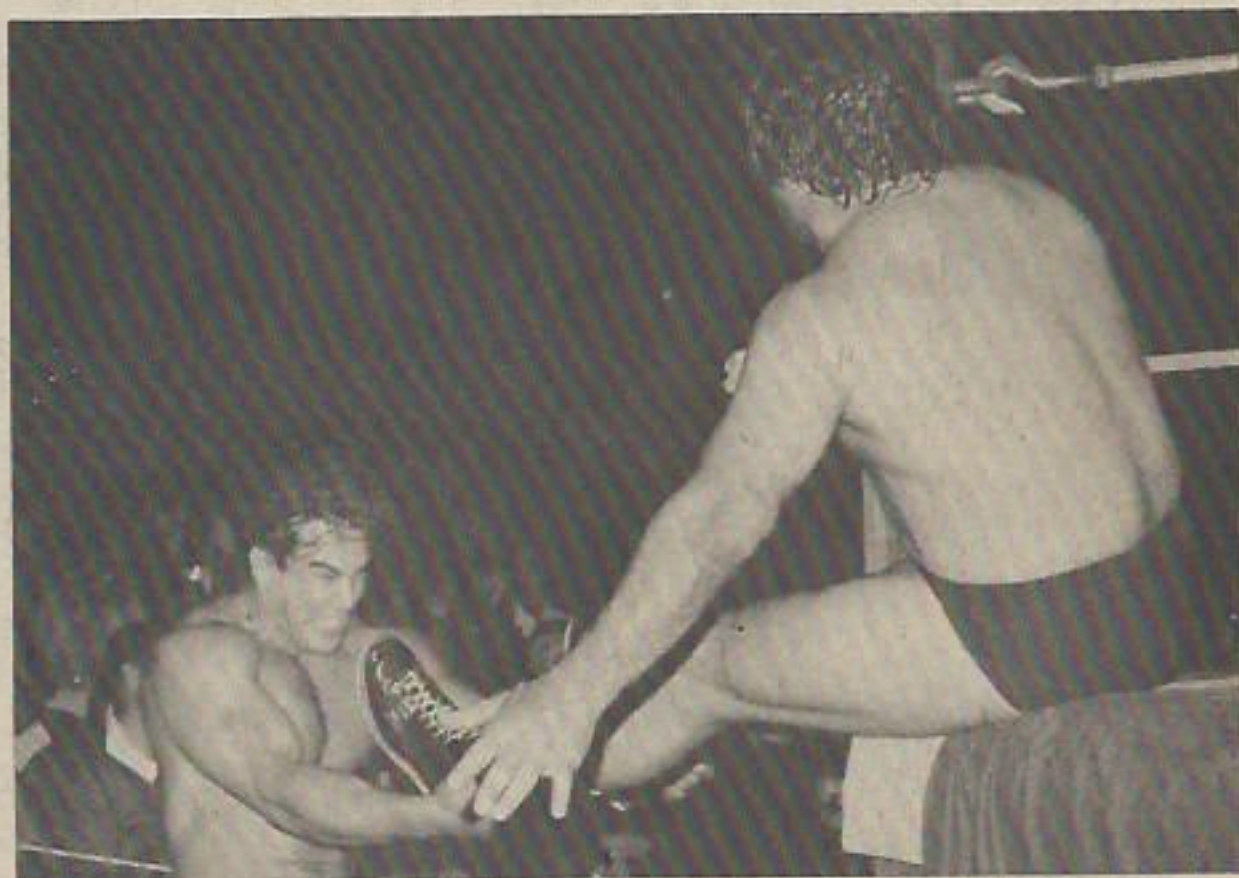
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CAPSULE PROFILE

RICK STEAMBOAT



Rick Steamboat, holding Harley Race in a headlock (above), says he would like to defeat the NWA champion and eventually be regarded as the best wrestler ever. Rick wraps Paul Jones' leg around the ringpost (below).



WHILE FEMALE FANS may disagree, his powerful good looks sometimes act as a detriment (*"Yeah, a lot of the other, uglier wrestlers are jealous and always want to break my face in half"*) . . . Much was expected of him after an explosive debut (*"Yeah, I was the new superstar. Everyone thought I was the second coming of who knows what"*) . . . Quick, violent temper brought his career to the edge of permanent disqualification (*"I was a hot-head. I can't turn it on and off that easily. Maturity lets you control your emotions better. That's what I've done"*) . . . Confused many with his celebrated teaming with former rival Ric Flair (*"Ric isn't so bad. He's got good points and bad points, like the rest of us"*) . . . In recent bouts, has tempered his volatile cockiness and focused more on what he does, instead of what he says

(*"Any jerk can say anything, right? Takes guts and a real wrestler to back up those remarks in the ring"*) . . . Credits fans with much of his success (*"Sometimes I'm down and I only have to read a letter*

from some fan to brighten my entire day") . . . Makes no effort to conceal some of his ambitions (*"I want Harley Race's title and I want to be the best wrestler who ever lived"*). □

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Each day, out of the thousands of letters we receive, hundreds of them are from fans asking the whereabouts of their favorite wrestler. In this special column, we will try to answer the questions you ask the most!



JERRY BLACKWELL

He wants to use his wrestling nickname of "Crusher," but AWA officials won't permit him to do so until he defeats the original Crusher. Until that time, *Jerry Blackwell* challenges any and all scientific wrestlers to bodyslam him.

TED DiBIASE

Once again, the handsome young man is a champion after wrestling the NWA North American Heavyweight title from Mike George. However, DiBiase, always classy and considerate, wants foreign fans to rejoice in his triumphs and has embarked on a tour of the Orient.



KILLER KRUPP

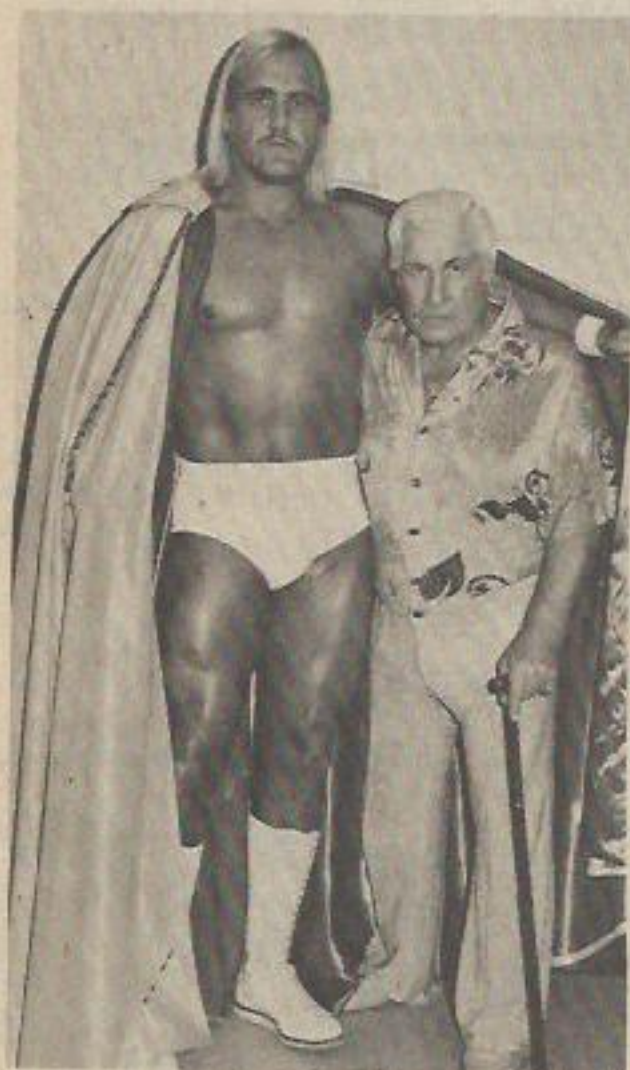
Night after night, the dreaded clawhold exacts fearsome punishment upon Nova Scotia grapplers. Completely indifferent to the normal restraints of human conduct, Killer Krupp has vowed to destroy each and every scientific wrestler who dares cross his path. Many fans worry that he will not be stopped.

JIM GARVIN

Currently co-holder of the Florida tag team championship with the ever-popular Jack Brisco. This is Garvin's second tag team championship. While brilliant in individual matches, Garvin has a definite flair for partnerships, revelling in the cooperative demands of a tag team. □

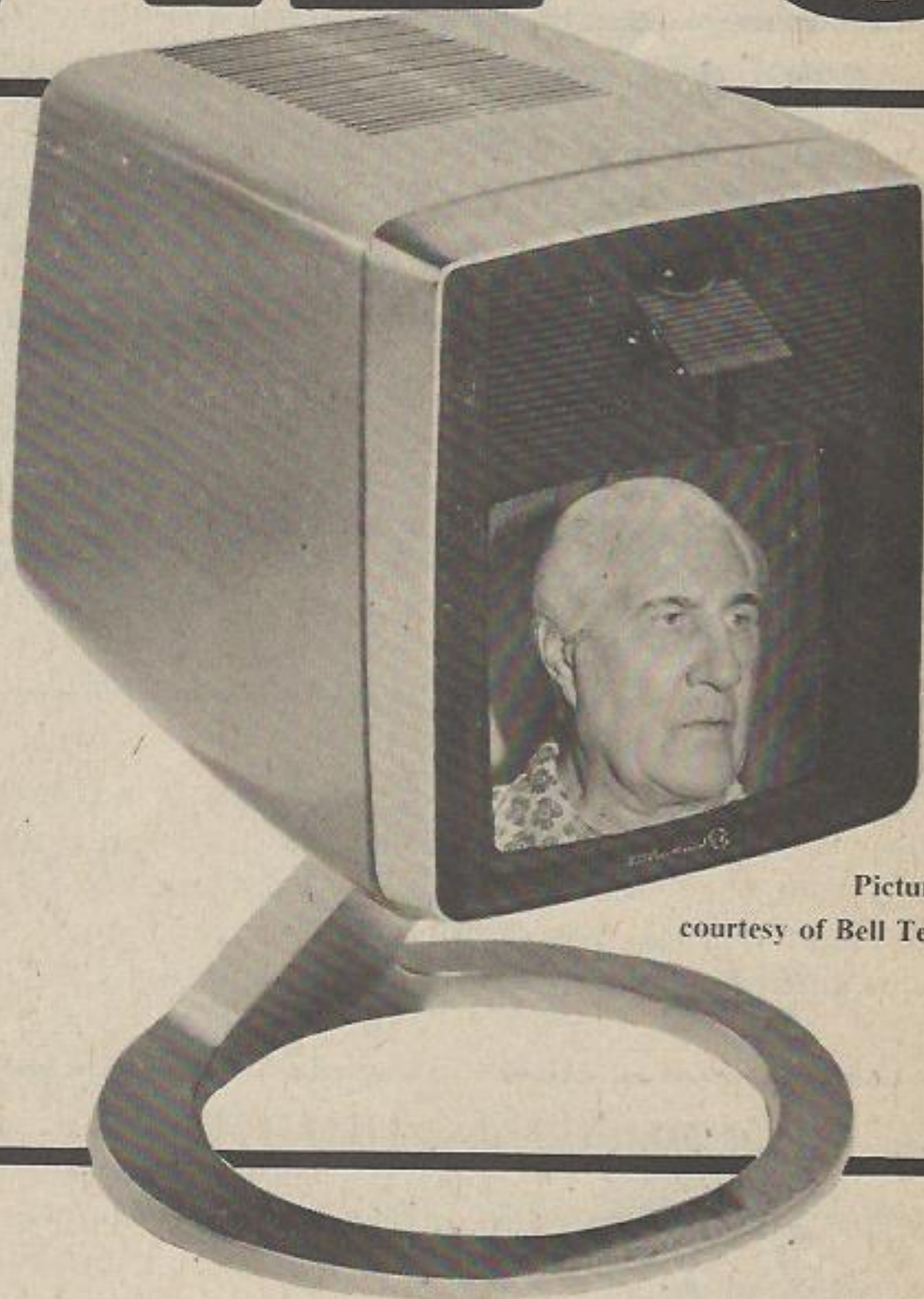


ONE



(Behind many great wrestlers stands a wily, shrewd, sometimes brilliant manager. Without such geniuses to guide them, many wrestlers might lurch and wander in aimless pursuit of unreachable goals. Arnold Skoaland and Fred Blassie are two of the very best. Though their philosophies are violently opposed, their successes cannot be minimized. From his hotel suite in New York, Arnold Skoaland confronts Fred Blassie, sequestered in his weekend Hollywood retreat.)

Every month the telephone wires will crackle as two top grapplers rage and argue. We'll print the unedited transcript of their conversations, giving the fans a privileged glimpse at wrestlers which can be found nowhere else



Picturephones
courtesy of Bell Telephone

ARNOLD SKOALAND:

My, the fashion plate himself.

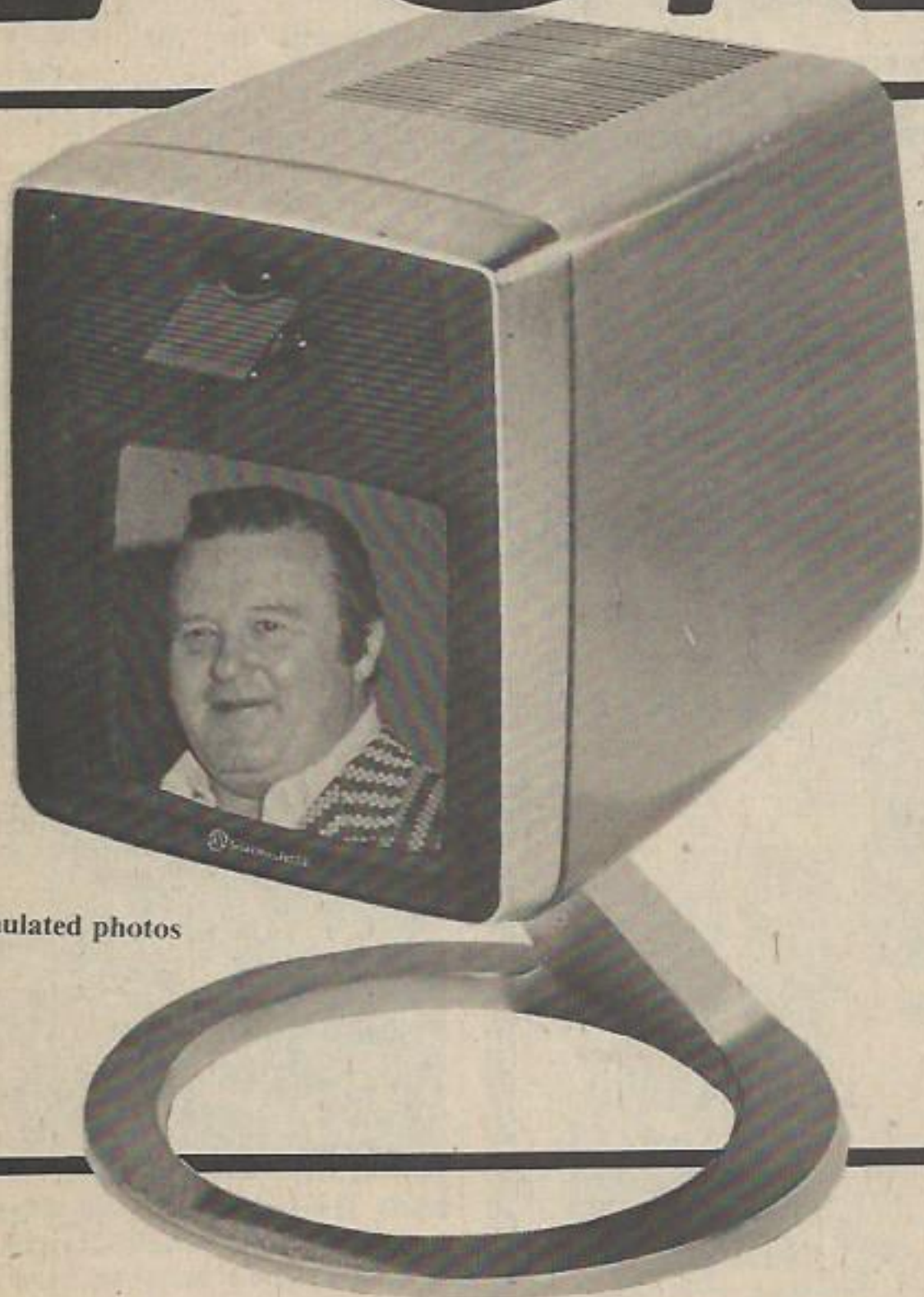
FRED BLASSIE:

That's right, pencil-neck geek. I can dress better than you in a rainstorm on holy holiday.

AS: What does that mean?

FB: What it means, geek, is I'm better looking than you, in better shape, dress better, and manage a better man. Speaking to and about

W ONE



Simulated photos



fine dresser, fashionable
looker . . .

FB: Right, right.

AS: But you pick stupid wrestlers,
men with egg salad for brains.

FB: Like?

AS: Hussein Arab, Spiros Arion,
Victor Rivera. Three bubble-
brains if ever I saw one.

FB: Those fine, upstanding
citizens of foreign countries
distinguish men, the sport and
their native lands, their bank
accounts, and everything else
noble when they beat up your
men, pencil-necked geek.

AS: Fred, calm down, can't we
have a rational discussion?

FB: Not if you're insulting my
men.

AS: I'm conceding they're some-
(Continued on page 64)

cowards, heh-heh, where's
the punk?

AS: Who's that?

FB: Backlund, Howdy Doody,
pasty-face, garlic-breath, what-
ever, the bum who's champ
but not for long.

AS: Bob couldn't make this
conversation.

FB: No guts, huh?

AS: Not at all, he's training.

FB: Training, hah, practicing his
running. Wait until my main

man Hulk Hogan gets the
geek in his arms, he'll crush
him, squeeze him, batter the
bum from Jersey to Boston
and back again.

AS: Then where's Hogan?

FB: Think he needs to talk to a
bum like you.

AS: Can he talk?

FB: You sayin' he's stupid?

AS: It would run in the family.

FB: You sayin' I'm stupid, geek?

AS: Fred, you are many things,

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BEHIND THE DOOR

(Continued from Page 8)

Bruno Sammartino is the most honest man I have ever met. In a sport governed even more by emotion than the size of one's muscles, Bruno is not reluctant to reveal his innermost self. His opponents and fans alike know exactly where his sentiments lie. In this circumstance, however, he is not sure himself.

"When I get into the ring with him," Bruno said, "the first thing I



Bruno Sammartino shows our photographer his disdain for Larry Zbyszko, as he grabs a photo of his former friend...

see is that scowl of his. I completely forget myself. My old feelings for him are no longer important. It's my body on the line against a man who knows he could make his career with a victory. I immediately flash back to the TV match and how he nearly killed me with a chair. It's strange. Hours before that I'm feeling awful, just awful that this whole thing had to happen. I regret that I could not talk Larry out of this madness. Then I'm in the ring with him and I want to tear him apart."

Bruno directed his attention

toward his junior running partner and smiled. "Hangin' in there?" he asked.

"All the way, Bruno," I said, struggling to conceal my panting. "You know, a lot of people have told me that this whole thing reminds them of what happened between Pedro Morales and myself in 1972," Bruno said. "In a way, yes, in a way no. What happened with Pedro was a complete misunderstanding, something we were eventually able to work out. We were really steamed at each other, but we had our match at Shea Stadium and had a clean, scientific match for 70 minutes. After that we



... and tears it in half. Bruno's feelings vary until he sees Larry in the ring.

made up and everything was fine.

"People say that the same will happen with me and Larry. I don't see that happening at all. This was no misunderstanding. This was a calculated move on Larry's part. And when we get in the ring, the matches are nothing like the one I had with Pedro. There is nothing lower than what Zbyszko did to me. He's a little creep and he'll pay the price."

Bruno's face reddened with sudden anger and his pace quickened to a sprint. I didn't even try to keep up. ☐

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ON THE ROAD

(Continued from Page-12)

the reaction.

"Yes, fans may quarrel with my style. That's because they don't understand what I'm trying to do nor why I'm acting this way."

I waited for the explanation. Bockwinkel sipped, made an expression of ecstasy, and changed the album. Beethoven's Ninth.

"So?"

"So what?"

"Sew buttons," I said exasperated. "What are you trying to achieve by this style?"

"Wrestling immortality. No champion has dared pursue this manner of wrestling before. All the others, mediocre, uncreative, tend to the same boring holds, maneuvers, same boring bragging. Always the same. I must explore the outer ridges of wrestling, push the envelope, to borrow a fighter pilot term.



Bockwinkel is trying to develop a new style of wrestling that will bring him immortality in the sport's annals.

"What use is life if you cannot push yourself to the limit? How can you grow as a human being unless you see how good, or great, or bad, you really are? By developing a new way of wrestling, I am blazing trails lesser beings fear traversing.



Nick Bockwinkel is a thinking man's wrestler, who is constantly trying to better not only his wrestling abilities, but his mind as well.

"Criticism indicates progress, recognition, however, ill-informed it may be. No member of the wrestling public, especially fans and writers, possesses sufficient intelligence to understand what I am attempting.

"For decades, there was one way of wrestling, one way to be champion, one way to live. Now Nick Bockwinkel says there must be a better way, a better method of wrestling, a better future. I dare to be different. What more can one ask of a champion?"

A comfortable, thoughtful silence ensued. I wondered if there was one more question I could ask this brilliant man pondering the cosmic strains of Ludwig Van Beethoven. I knew there was no other question. Anything further would be trite.

I left Minneapolis full of deeper understanding. After all, Nick Bockwinkel was a man, a living, breathing lifeform capable of the highest thoughts and lowest desire. Never again could I perceive him as a mere rulebreaking champion.

My Honda Accord pointed toward the Southeast for my rendezvous in Florida. □

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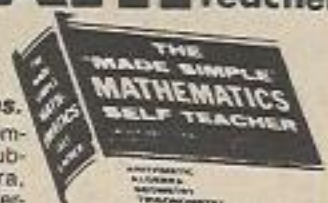
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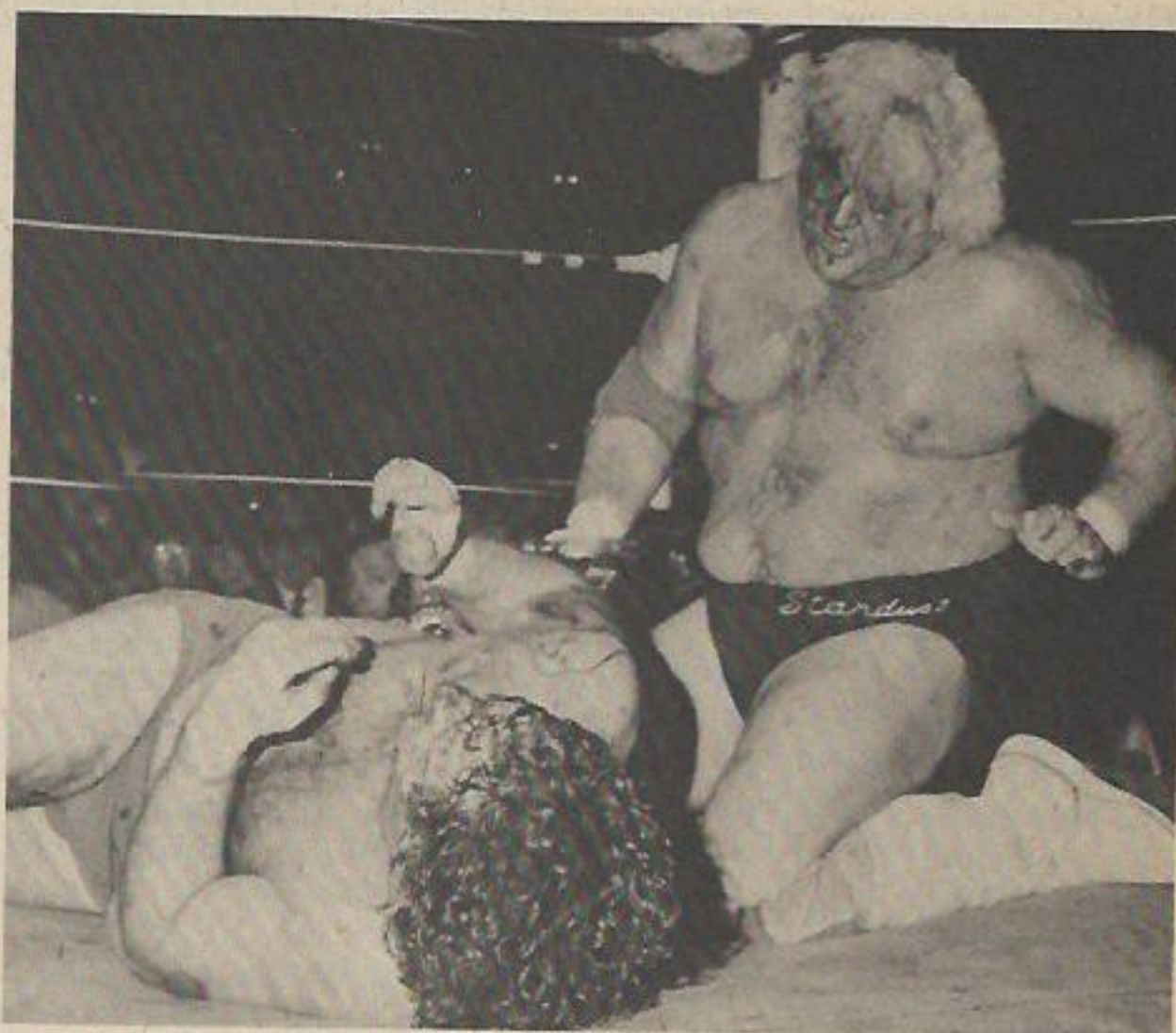
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DUSTY RHODES

(Continued from Page 35)



Dusty would stop at nothing to repay Funk for last August's attack. The American dream hammers Terry's right wrist until it fractured (above). Terry is consoled by brother Dory Jr. after being fitted for a cast (below).



"Took me a while to get over it, that's for sure."

Some wondered if he'd ever be the same again.

"Well, you can only absorb so much, suffer so much before you begin to wonder about yourself, wonder if you'll ever be whole again. Kinda like the first time a woman breaks your heart. You think you'll never love again, never laugh again.

"That's how I felt after I lost the title. All I had were two burning fires in my gut: prove to the world that my winning the belt wasn't no fluke, and pay back Terry Funk. That got me outta bed every morning."

Each match between them swiftly degenerated into frightful brawls. Scientific maneuvers abandoned, respect ignored, common decency despised, these men wanted one thing only: destruction.

"Gettin' kinda tired of whuppin' that fat pig's face," said Funk, snickering. "How many times can you beat

someone, leave 'em for dead, step on his face and squash his fat gut before you get kinda tired of it all?

"When you're as good as I am, you want some competition. I did this one time too many. I told the whale I'll give him one more chance to win and then that's all. Then he gotta find people his own level to wrestle, like a cow. It's utterly ridiculous."

This was one match too many for Funk. This match became the moment of vengeance for Rhodes.

Perhaps Terry took Rhodes lightly. Perhaps Funk thought Rhodes was psychologically scarred. That was a near-fatal mistake.

Toward the end of an absolutely ferocious match, Rhodes maneuvered Funk into the precise position he wanted. Mouth parted in a vindictive wary cry, Rhodes seized Funk's arm, bent it back, forward, and snapped until the hand was broken. Funk collapsed, face contorted with anguish.

Later that evening, Funk was whisked to the hospital, where the preliminary diagnosis was a hairline fracture of the wrist. Despite the intense pain, Funk consented to a brief interview.

"Let me tell you, the whale will regret this for the rest of his life," Funk muttered between swollen lips. "He'll never escape me. I'll hunt him down and harpoon him and wipe him off the map. Now let me rest."

Surprisingly, Rhodes was subdued, almost morose after the match. Instead of dressing quickly, Dusty sat draped in a towel, handsome features convolved into a thoughtful frown.

"I did it," he said, almost whispering. "Paid the sucker back for last August. Feels mighty good." Someone asked if it really did feel good. Rhodes glanced up, expression sharp, relaxed slightly, forced a smile.

"Yeah, I guess." □

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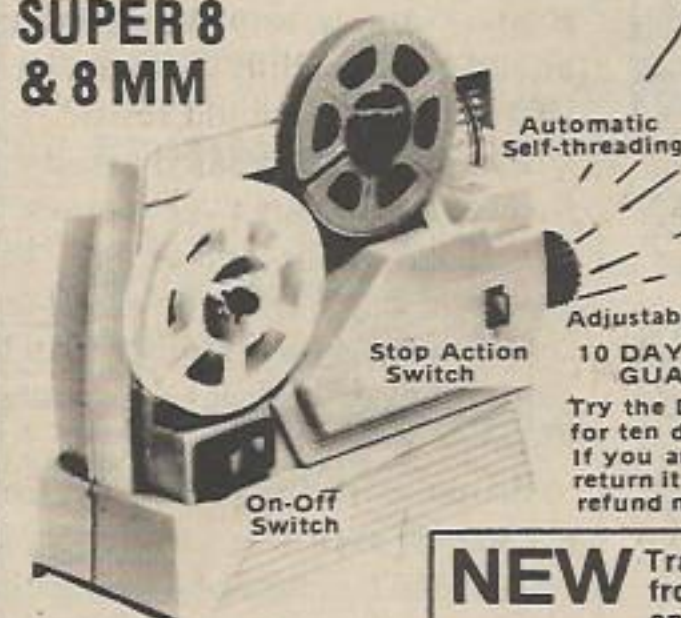
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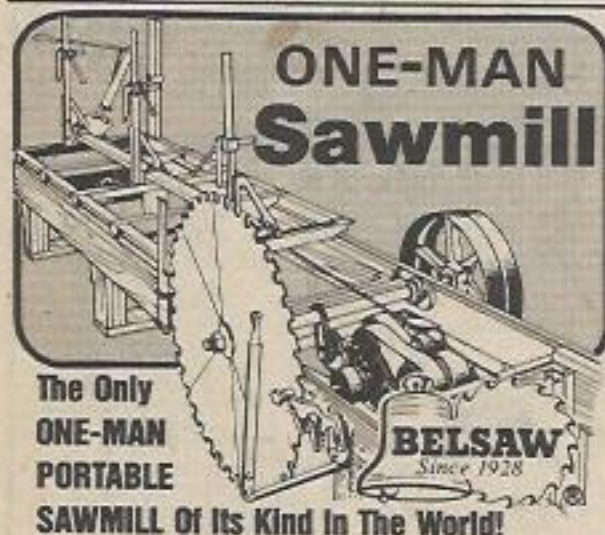
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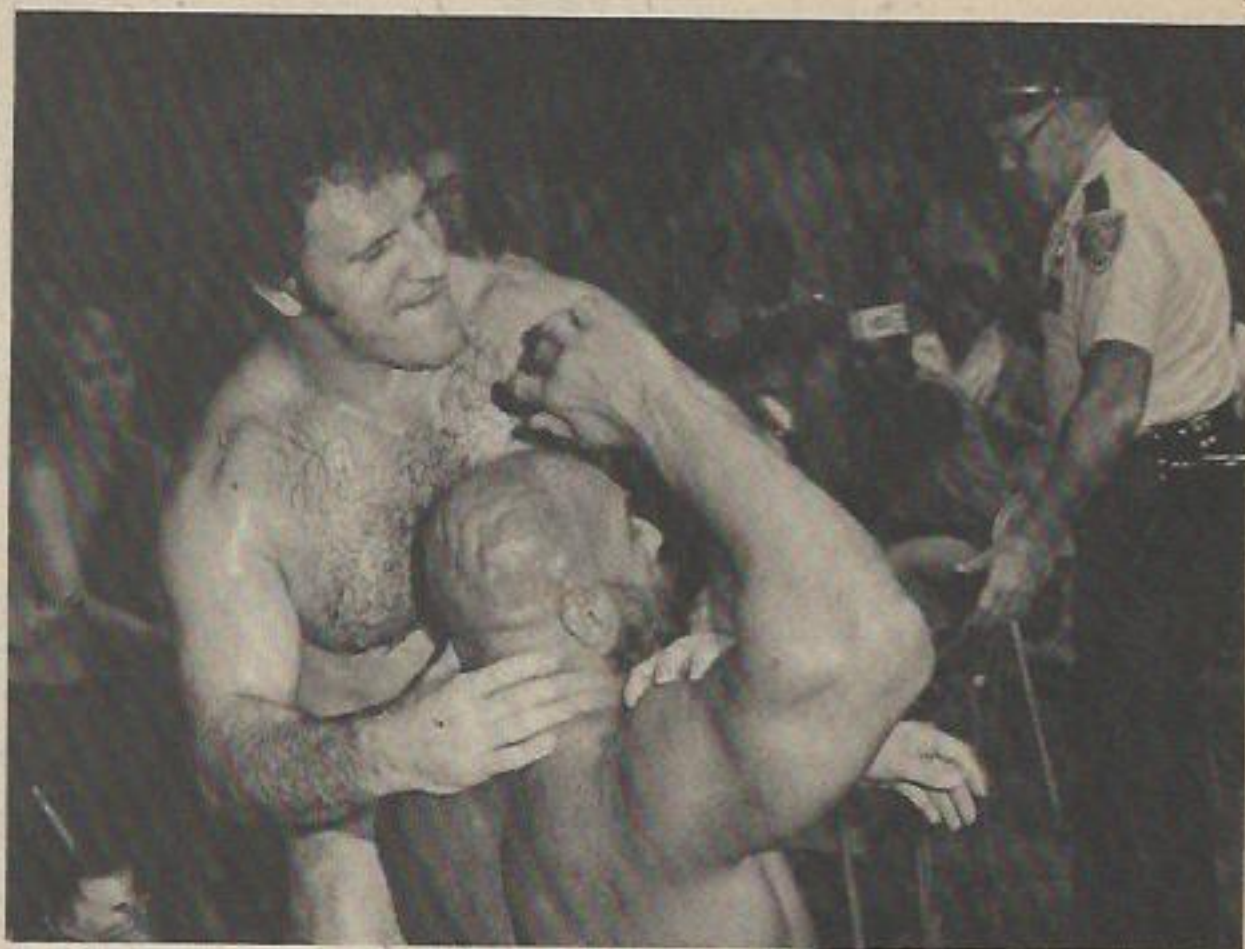
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BRUNO

(Continued from Page 37)



Graham continually fled the ring to break Sammartino's momentum. Finally, Bruno went out after him and slammed Superstar's clean-shaven head into the hard wooden floor.

But old habits don't die. At four in the morning, I'm on the floor (looking for my pen, come on), when I see a copy of that day's paper. Peering (bad light, you know) at the tiny print (must need glasses), I saw that an old pal, Bruno Sammartino, was meeting an old nemesis, Billy Graham, later that night. Who could resist?

I wanted to be a fan. I asked my buddy to buy the tickets because I would surely be recognized. We got good seats, a few rows off the ring. Settled in for a super match. Little did I realize I'd witness history.

Bruno's fierce determination evidenced itself from the opening bell. I can't remember seeing the Living Legend smoother or tougher. No tiny smile at the corner of his lips. No crinkling of those piercing blue eyes. All intensity and grim determination. Bruno had a score to settle.

As for Graham, he, too, was determined. He resented persistent talk that he cheated the WWF title away from Bruno back in Baltimore years ago. And Graham

resented talk he'd been a lousy champ. The guy has a lot of pride. This match started out as a proving ground for both men. It degenerated from there.

Bruno used his typical assortment of maneuvers, parried Graham's brutal thrusts, and enjoyed an early advantage. However, Graham would not be denied. Sporting a new look, Superstar launched offensive after offensive in a frenzied effort to wear Sammartino down.

It didn't work. Fans loved this bout as the whole arena screamed their throats dry, Brock and pal included. The match neared an inevitable conclusion. Bruno maneuvers Graham near the ropes. A fierce tussle. Bruno gained leverage and pinned Graham.

Leverage? How? I could have sworn Bruno's foot was on the ropes enabling him to gain powerful leverage. Like Graham gained when he won the belt from Sammartino. Did Bruno require illegal help?

Films failed to prove this assertion. Yet I saw it. For once,

Billy Graham and I agreed on something.

"That fool, that pasta-face, that turkey-neck, had his foot on the ropes when he beat me. He cheated, and I demand justice," ranted Graham in the dressing room. "We gonna have double standards, one for me, one for Bruno?"

"If I blink wrong, the whole damn world comes down my throat. But Sammartino gets away with everything just 'cause he's short, ugly, and stupid. Ain't fair, you know, just ain't right."

No, Superstar, it ain't right. And I don't believe in applying a double standard. If proof can be obtained to demonstrate Sammartino cheated, I'll be the first to print it.

"Foot on the rope? What's with that joker anyway? Guy loses, should take it like a man and not a whining little punk," said Bruno. "I don't cheat. I don't have to cheat. If that joker wants to put on the boots and trunks and have another go, tell him I'm ready."



In a test of strength between two of the strongest men in sports, Graham gains the leverage to lower Bruno to his knees.

"Doggone it, I hate when guys have to come up with an excuse. Can't they accept their defeat? The better man won, that's all," Bruno shrugged.

I won't get into a little argument over who's the better man. But I woulda sworn I saw Bruno's foot on the ropes. □

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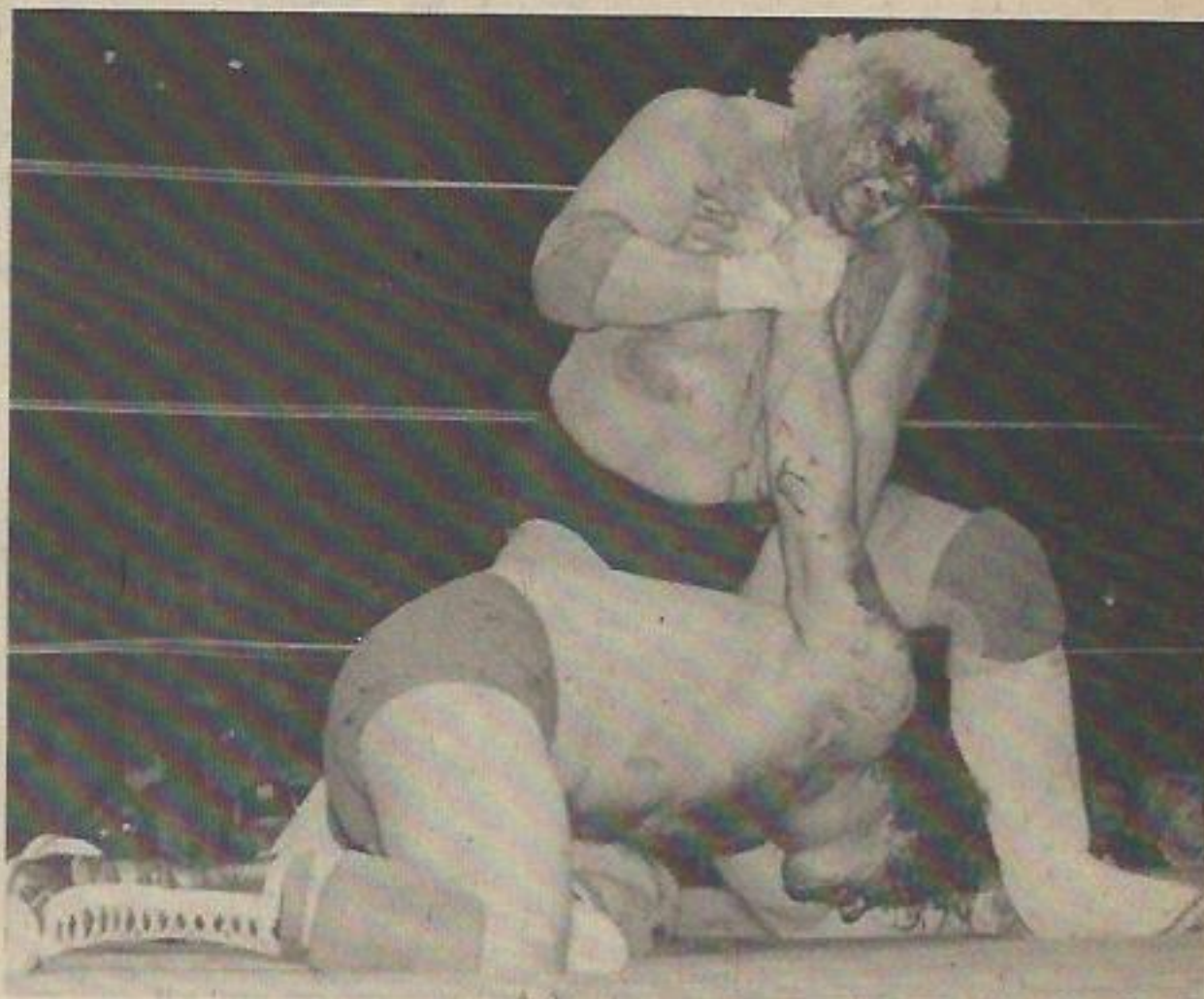
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THE INSIDER

(Continued from Page 27)



The battles between former NWA champions Dusty Rhodes and Terry Funk feature spilled blood and broken bones, but very little scientific wrestling. The most notable incident was when Terry caused Dusty to lose the title to Harley Race with a pre-bout attack. Above, Rhodes injures Funk's wrist in return.

RUMOR VS. FACT

RUMOR: The Samoans are direct descendants of the mysterious Big Foot monster. Lou Albano discovered the tag team in a deep cave somewhere in the far reaches of Samoa.

FACT: There have been more rumors about the origin of the Samoans than anything else in wrestling in recent years. One report stated that their father was a soldier in the Marines during World War II (on the Allied side), and that he was lost during a beachfront invasion. The Big Foot monster rumor, like 99 percent of the rumors concerning the Samoans, is completely unfounded. We'll keep you informed on all stories, however. Someday, somewhere, someone is going to figure out who the hell these monsters really are.

RUMOR: Rulebreakers John Studd, Jimmy Snuka, and

Austin Idol are planning to form a new punk rock group called "Cruelty." They will pierce their ears, wear eye makeup, and tour the U.S. on a 12-city gig.

FACT: This ridiculous rumor apparently started when Idol began bragging to a southeast wrestling writer about his marvelous singing talents. The writer, an easily-impressed rookie, believed every detail Idol made up. Sorry, Idol, some of us are wise to your cute tricks.

INJURY REPORT

TERRY FUNK is recovering from a broken wrist. "Think I got it from hitting that egg-sucking dog DUSTY RHODES too many times over the head," Terry said.

MIL MASCARAS is suffering from a sprained ankle. He twisted it while executing a flying tackle in a match in Mexico.

Catch you later. □



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BODYSLAM & PINFALLS

(Continued from Page 10)

ments. To hear people call him a puppet and a prisoner of his manager, eats at a wrestler's very soul. There's no excuse for the fools who repeat it. There's no way it can do anything but harm to Bockwinkel's ego.

Talking to Nick, you can see the pressure he is under. It hurts his sense of fairness to even think about firing Heenan, but it also hurts to hear people call him a pawn. To salvage his reputation, more precious to him than life itself, Nick might be forced to split with Heenan.

"Fired is the wrong word," Nick points out, "we'd just go our separate ways. Bobby and I can't think of each other as 'employer' or 'employee.' We're partners. I'd just like those liars to understand that. All I'd have to do for Bobby to leave is ask him to go. He'd understand. He'd be hurt, lose a lot of money, but he'd go. That's the kinda of man Bobby Heenan is.

"I'd rather cut off my right arm than have Bobby leave, though. Wrestling is so damn exciting with him. His strategies are genius. He knows me so well, knows just what to do to keep me on edge. He's the only great man I've ever met. I've been privileged to work with him."

Then Nick's voice grows hard as he vows, "No one can say I haven't earned my

success. I work harder than any man I know. The history books will have to say that. I'll make sure they do. Centuries from now, they'll know my name. I'll make sure they do. I don't care what sacrifices it takes."

Heenan doesn't like to talk about the subject, either. Fate has commanded that he must.

"If I ever get my hands on the guy who started those rumors," Heenan swears, "he's in for the beating of his life. There had to be more than one. Rumors that spread that quickly have to be invented by a group. I should've expected it. They couldn't beat us in the ring, so they tried to get at us through the sewer.

"I care about Nick's title as much as he does. That's why I insisted about the clause that our union end if Nick loses the title. That would mean I wasn't helping him. I don't stay where I'm not doing any good.

"If the rumors keep up, I'm not doing any good. Then I should leave. God, I hate these people!"

Nick Bockwinkel and Bobby Heenan are perhaps the greatest partnership in wrestling history. Together, they form something exquisite. That will all be destroyed because people are vile enough to spread rumors and others are stupid enough to believe them.

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ONE ON ONE

(Continued from Page 47)



Arnold Skoaland sits ringside at Madison Square Garden for a Bob Backlund title defense with the WWF belt in his lap.

what talented. But brains they don't have have. Besides, why do you usually sign the foreign wrestlers?

FB: Because they need a firm hand and a friendly voice in this country. Because slobbs like you exploit them, take advantage of them, feed them lies, show them the ugly side of America, not the wonderful land of opportunity and freedom that I show them.

AS: Teaching them illegal holds,

cheating and . . .

FB: Liar! Liar! I show them how to win. What is America if not winning, if not achieving the best you can do. Hah, what would you know about that, what would you know about success? You've never accomplished anything in your life.

AS: Managing two world champions isn't success? [Chuckles]

FB: Who?

AS: Bruno Sammartino and Bob Backlund, that's who.

FB: Bums, losers, nerds. What's Sammartino doin' now, huh? Talkin' on television because



Fred Blassie, circa 1964, glares across the ring at his opponent, Bruno Sammartino (above). Arnold Skoaland flexes his muscles early in his career (below).



he doesn't have the guts to wrestle, a bum, a geek, a slob, that's what, washed-up, finished. As for Backlund, Howdy Doody will be done soon as he gets up the guts to wrestle Hogan.

AS: We haven't refused you.

FB: The climate is impossible. You want Hogan shackled with chains, yes, that's the only way you'll let Backlund wrestle him.

AS: Blassie, name the date, the time, and the place. We'll be there.

FB: We'll be looking for you, pencil-neck geek. ☐

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